DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 583 PS 023 717

AUTHOR Kinzig, Karen; Nakai, Janet
TITLE Improving Student Engagement in Social and Academic Activities.
PUB DATE May 95
NOTE 149p.; Master's Field-Based Program, Saint Xavier University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Behavior Change; Change Strategies; Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; Family Environment; Interpersonal Competence; Intervention; Learning Activities; Program Effectiveness; Prosocial Behavior; Self Efficacy; Self Esteem; *Social Development; *Student Attitudes; Student Behavior; *Student Improvement; Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

Kindergarten and third-grade students in two suburban communities located in northern Illinois participated in the implementation of a program for improving student's engagement in social interactions and academic activities. The problem documentation indicated a need for teacher's intervention in order to improve student's social academic engagement as well as address parental concerns about their child's engagement. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students' lack of engagement is related to cultural differences; lack of experience in control over their environment; internalized performance variables including self-efficacy, lack of self-esteem and ownership in the learning process; absence of intrinsic motivation; poorly developed social skills; and poor self-confidence. Two major categories of intervention were suggested: (1) creating a learning environment in which students accept and develop an appreciation for diversity; and (2) using a variety of teaching strategies through which students' sense of ownership, self-efficacy, and self esteem will be enhanced. Follow-up assessments indicated that, as a result of the interventions, the students in both kindergarten and third grade increased their levels of engagement in the classroom. Measures of satisfaction with self, self-efficacy, school attitudes, and friendship also indicated improvement following interventions. (Ten appendices include copies of the parent permission letter, student questionnaires, parent questionnaire, family history questionnaire, and behavioral checklists for kindergarten and third grade. Contains 47 references.) (AA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 391 583

IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

by

Karen Kinzig
Janet Nakai

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Karen T. Kinzig
Janet C. Nakai
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PS 022717

Action Research Project
Site: Palatine, IL
Submitted: May, 1995

Classroom Teachers

Hickory Point Elementary School
Northbrook, IL

Lincoln Elementary School
Evanston, IL

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This project was approved by

Terry J. Stirling, Ph. D.
Advisor

Advisor

Dean, School of Education

Abstract

AUTHORS: Karen Kinzig
Janet Nakai
DATE: April 25, 1995 SITE: Palatine

TITLE: Improving Student Engagement in Social and Academic Activities

ABSTRACT: This report describes a program for improving student engagement in social interactions and academic activities. The targeted populations consist of kindergarten and third grade students in two suburban communities located in Northern Illinois. The problems of engagement are documented through teacher observations, student surveys and parent surveys. This data indicates a need for teacher intervention in order to improve the students' social and academic engagement as well as parental concerns about their child's engagement.

Analysis of probable cause data reveals that students' lack of engagement is related to cultural differences, lack of experience in control over their environment, internalized performance variables including self-efficacy, lack of ownership in the learning process and self-esteem, absence of intrinsic motivation, poorly developed social skills and poor self confidence.

Solution strategies suggested by the literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting have resulted in the selection of two major categories of intervention: creating a learning environment in which students accept and develop an appreciation for diversity; and using a variety of teaching strategies through which students' sense of ownership, self-efficacy and self esteem will be enhanced.

Table of Contents

		Page
Abstract		i
Chapter		
1.	Problem Statement and Community Background	1
	Statement of Problem	1
	Northbrook Site	1
	Immediate Setting	1
	Community Setting	3
	Evanston Site	3
	Immediate Setting	3
	Community Setting	4
	State and National Context of Problem	5
2.	Problem Evidence and Probable Causes	9
	Problem Evidence	9

Data Collection 10

Northbrook Site 11

Evanston Site 18

Probable Causes 26

Northbrook Site 26

Evanston Site 27

Probable Cause Literature 28

3. The Solution Strategy 30

Review of the Literature 30

Intrinsic Motivation 31

Self-Efficacy 34

Self-Esteem 38

Ownership 40

Environment 41

Multicultural Education 43

The Multicultural Classroom 47

Classroom Environment 50

Making Similarities and Differences An Explicit Part of the Curriculum 51

Providing Opportunities For Sharing Individual Cultures 52

Strategies to Promote Ownership 53

Cooperative Learning and Self-Esteem 55

The Project Approach 56

Project Outcomes 58

Project Outcome 1 59

Project Outcome 2 60

Action Plan 61

Northbrook Site 61

Evanston Site 64

4. Intervention History 71

Restatement of Project Objectives 71

Intervention Summary 71

Historical Description of Intervention 72

Northbrook Site 72

Evanston Site 81

Presentation and Analysis of Results 89

Northbrook Site 89

Evanston Site 97

Conclusions and Recommendations 106

References Cites 111

Appendices 117

Appendix A - Parent Permission Letter Kindergarten 117

Appendix B - Parent Permission Letter Third Grade 118

Appendix C - Student Questionnaire - Fall Kindergarten 119

Appendix D - Student Questionnaire - Fall Third Grade 120

Appendix E - Student Questionnaire - Spring Kindergarten 121

Appendix F - Student Questionnaire - Spring Third Grade 122

Appendix G - Parent Questionnaire Letter Kindergarten and Third Grade 123

Appendix H - Parent Questionnaire Kindergarten and Third Grade 124

Appendix I - Family History Questionnaire 125

Appendix J - Behavioral Checklist Kindergarten and Third Grade 126

Chapter One

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Statement of Problem

Kindergarten and third grade students demonstrate a lack of engagement in social interactions and academic activities as evidenced by teacher observations, behavioral checklists, parent surveys, and student performance.

Northbrook Site

Immediate Setting

Hickory Point School is one of two elementary schools in Northbrook School District Twenty-seven with grades kindergarten through grade three. The total enrollment of the school is two hundred seventy seven students, eighty six percent of whom are white, one percent are Hispanic, thirteen percent are Asian/Pacific Islander and seven tenths percent are African American. Ninety-six percent of the students attend school every day and there is four percent mobility noted. Four tenths percent of the students are reported to be from low income families. Seven percent of the students fall into the Limited-English-Proficient category and are eligible for bilingual education

(Northbrook District Twenty-seven, 1994).

The staff of the school consists of thirteen classroom teachers, two resource teachers, one Extended Living Class teacher and three assistants, one social worker, one speech and language specialist, one English as a second language teacher, one music teacher, one art teacher, two physical education teachers, one computer lab specialist, one librarian, four instructional assistants, one secretary, two clerks, two custodians and the principal. The average years of teaching experience is twelve years. Forty-seven percent of the teacher's have a bachelor's degree and fifty-three percent have a master's and above degree.

The school was built in nineteen hundred sixty-nine and is well maintained and well supplied with instructional materials, teacher and student supplies, library books, audio-visual material, computers in classrooms, complete computer lab, and an extensive library of computer programs.

The language arts curriculum is based on the integration of the language arts disciplines of listening, speaking, writing and reading. Teachers have been well grounded in the philosophy and practice of "whole language." At present, the district is involved in the second year of a three year commitment to study the further integration of the language arts curriculum.

In the current school year the district is in the second year of implementing the University of Chicago Mathematics curriculum, Every Day Mathematics. The hallmark of this math curriculum is its implementation of the

principles of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

The social studies and science curriculums revolve around a variety of themes that require students to be actively involved in problem solving inquiry and activities. Attempts are made to use literature across the various disciplines in order to implement a thematic approach to lesson design.

Community Setting

The Village of Northbrook is located twenty miles north of Chicago. It has a population of 32,308. Ninety-three percent of the population are white, two tenth percent black, six percent Asian, and one and six tenth percent Hispanic. The median income is $73, 362 and the mean value of owner occupied housing is $271,000. The percentage of adults who have twelve or more years education is 94 and 55 percent of adults have sixteen or more years of education. The village features exceptional sports facilities including: two indoor ice arenas, a twenty-seven hole golf course, a three hundred fifty seat auditorium, twenty-two tennis courts at the Northbrook Velodrome, and a twelve mile bike track.

Evanston Site
Immediate Setting

Lincoln Elementary is a kindergarten through fifth grade school, located in the southeast section of Evanston, Illinois. The present building was constructed in 1968, replacing the original structure which was built in 1897.

Renovation of the non-classroom wing was completed in 1973.

One of the smaller of eleven elementary schools, Lincoln's total population is 349 students. The racial/ethnic backgrounds are: sixty percent White, thirty three percent African-American, four percent Hispanic, two percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and one percent Native American. Twenty four percent of the students are from low income families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds or eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunches. Three percent of the students fall into the Limited-English-Proficient category and are eligible for bilingual education (Evanston, District 65, 1994).

The organizational structure at Lincoln School includes the following homerooms: kindergarten, first-second grade, third grade, fourth-fifth grade and the self-contained learning disabilities/speech and language classes. There are 15 classroom teachers, two aides, three fine arts teachers and five full and part-time support staff. Average class sizes reported in the 1994 report card are 18.6 for first grade and 21.3 for third grade. The daily average number of minutes devoted to teaching core subjects at the third grade level are as follows: Math 40, Reading/L.A. 120, Science 30, and Social Studies 30.

Community Setting

Evanston, the first suburban town immediately north of Chicago proper, was settled in the early 1840's and incorporated in 1863. The city is well known for its schools, architecture and cultural activities. It is home to

Northwestern University, National Louis University and Kendall College. Two miles of Evanston's eastern shoreline are beaches and parks. The Gross Pointe Lighthouse, built in 1873, is on the national Register of Historic Places. In 1968, the town voted to voluntarily desegregate its schools.

According to the 1990 census, Evanston's population is 73,233 with an ethnic/racial make-up represented by the following groups: 50,684 White, 16,784 African-American, 3,500 Asian, 2,134 Hispanic, and 131 American Indian. The median age is 31.7 years. Sixty -five percent of the people live in a family structure. Family households with children under 18 years of age make up 24.6 percent of all families. Ten and seven tenths percent of households are headed by women. Per capita income in 1989 dollars was $22,346. Median income figures for households, families and non-family households were $41,115, $53,625, and $27,014, respectively. Five percent of families are below the poverty level.

Evanston's employment figures indicate that 68.8 percent of persons 16 years of age and older are in the labor force. Among persons 25 years of age and older, 89.2 percent obtained a high school diploma or better.

State and National Context of Problem

The problem of student engagement is the topic of a great deal of research. Researchers come to the discussion from many points of view.

In 1993, Kinderman stated that children's motivation in school has been a central concern for psychologists and educators because of its short-term and

long-term consequences. Children who are engaged in the challenges of ongoing learning activities can be expected to increase their competencies across time and to feel pride and satisfaction in their accomplishments. He continues to cite research by Skinner, Wellborn & Connell, (1990) as indicating that children who are engaged in school do in fact earn higher grades, score higher on standardized tests of achievement, and show better personal adjustment to school.

A key element in discussions of motivation is that of students' engagement versus disaffection in school.

> Engagement includes both behavioral and emotional components. Children who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest. The opposite of engagement is disaffection. Disaffected children can be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious toward teachers and classmates (Skinner and Belmont, 1993, p. 572).

Research indicates that there are many factors that contribute to student engagement.

> Several decades of research have demonstrated that an important contributor to school performance is an individual's expectations about whether he or she has any control over academic successes and failures. A robust body of empirical findings has been produced using a variety of constructs, such as locus of control, causal attributions, learned helplessness, and self-efficacy (Skinner, Wellborn & Connell, 1990, p. 22).

Perceived self-efficacy contributes to cognitive development and functioning. In 1993, Bandura, reported that students' beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their own learning and to master academic activities determine their aspirations, level of motivation, and academic accomplishments. In 1994, Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried, reported that academic intrinsic motivation concerns enjoyment of school learning and an orientation to master challenging tasks. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation is associated with pleasure derived from the learning process itself, curiosity, the learning of challenging and difficult tasks, persistence, and a high degree of task involvement (Berlyne Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, A.E. Gottfried, Harter, Lepper, Nicholls, Pittman, Boggiano, & Ruble as cited by Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1994).

> The phrase ownership in learning refers to the development of a sense of connectedness, active involvement, and personal investment in the

learning process. This is important for all learners in that it facilitates understanding and retention and promotes a desire to learn. (Voltz & Damiano-Lantz, 1993 p. 18).

Developing ownership in learning is an important aspect of maximizing learning potential (Voltz, & Damiano-Lantz, 1993 p. 22).

In addition to the factors that influence student engagement, researchers indicated specific strategies to develop student engagement. The literature reflected the effect of student, teacher, faculty and parental practices on student engagement.

Chapter Two

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSES

Problem Evidence

In developmentally appropriate primary classrooms student engagement is generally at acceptable levels. However, there is always a child or children that appear indifferent or non-participating. Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld (1989), colorfully portrays a typical scenario:

> Randy is in your class. See him with the half-closed eyes and slumping back leaning against the wall when everyone's jumping with the excitement of an idea? Why is his head on the table while the other eyes are beaming their brights on you? Randy doesn't respond when you ask a question or seem to be listening when you read a story. *What to do about Randy?* (p. 25)

Typically, teachers anguish over "the Randys" and ask themselves, "What can I do to help? Where have I gone wrong? Why can't I unlock the door and find a way to connect with this child? How am I going to get him to engage in this class?" Oftentimes teachers resort to cajoling, coaxing, bribing, ignoring,

pleading (Chenfeld, 1989). Usually their attempts are fruitless and often these children get lost in the shuffle and demands of the day. Students in primary classes who appear to be less engaged in social and academic activities than others do not always present themselves as severely as a "Randy".

Data Collection

In September, letters were sent to the parents informing them of the research project that was being conducted in their child's classroom. The letters informed the parents of the nature of the project. They also indicated that data would be collected and that students' names would not be used in any reporting or analysis. Parents of the kindergartners were asked to sign and return the portion of the letter indicating that they were aware of the project. (Appendix A) Parents of the third grade students were asked to sign and return the portion of the letter giving permission for their child's participation. (Appendix B)

In order to get a clear perspective on the students in the class that demonstrated engagement issues, several data collection instruments were devised and implemented. A behavioral checklist was used to qualify and quantify engagement behaviors. (Appendix J) The behavioral checklist was used three times per week for two weeks in order to monitor students' proximity to others, contributions to discussions, enthusiasm, and absorption in activities.

A questionnaire was administered to the kindergarten students (Appendix C) and to the third grade students (Appendix D). The questionnaires were used

to assess the students' sense of engagement in social and academic situations. The questions focused on five areas: sense of belonging, satisfaction with self, friendship, self-efficacy and general attitude toward school.

In addition a letter was sent to parents requesting their cooperation in the research. (Appendix G) They were asked to complete a survey designed to elicit their perceptions regarding their child's engagement. (Appendix H) The survey included six statements which followed the Likert scale format and two open-ended questions addressing the issues focused on in the student questionnaire. Parents responded to the open-ended questions with comments about their children's strengths and any other information they wished to share with the teacher.

Northbrook Site

The behavioral checklist made it possible to observe and record specific instances in which students demonstrated lack of engagement behaviors. It became apparent that 31 percent of the students demonstrated lack of engagement by frequently removing themselves from proximity to others, failing to contribute to discussions, appearing to lack enthusiasm or absorption in activities.

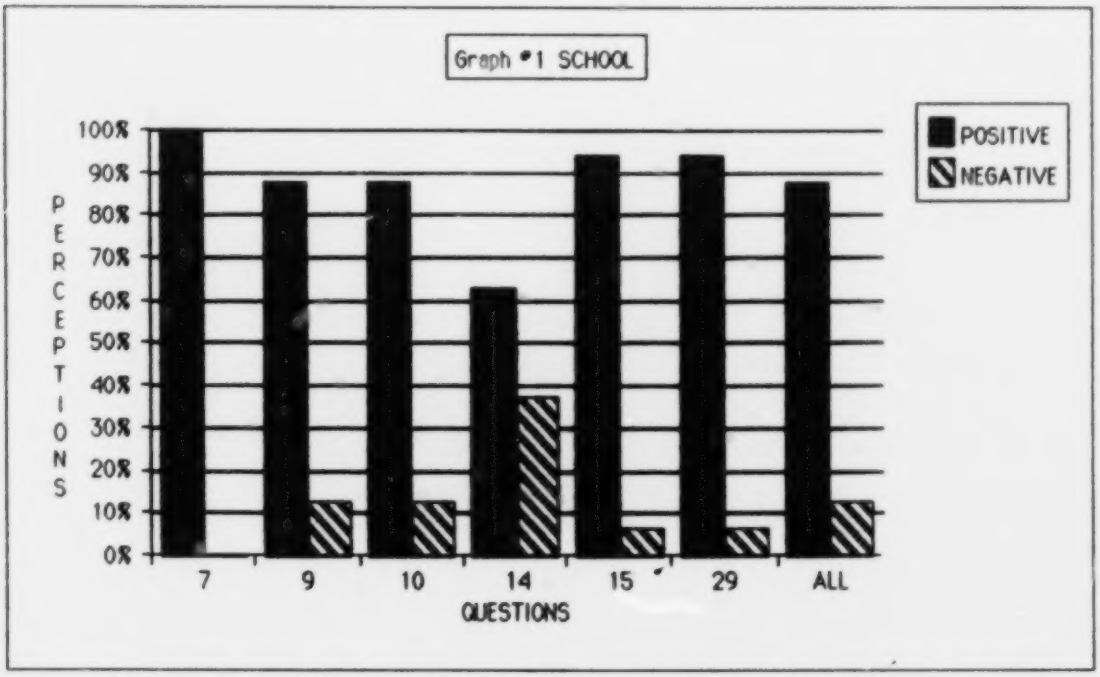
From the parent surveys it is encouraging to note that parents reported that 100 percent of the children enjoy playing with groups of children and that 87 percent of the children look forward to going to school. However, parents' responses to two statements addressing self-efficacy were significantly

negative. Eighty-one percent of the parents indicated that their children have difficulty taking risks and 81 percent also reported that their children give up easily when tasks are difficult. Additionally, 63 percent of the parents indicated that their children sometimes or rarely set and pursue goals. These responses reinforce the fact that the children need interventions that will contribute to the development of their confidence and sense of competence.

Twenty-five percent of the parents reported that their children have difficulty getting absorbed in activities. The responses to this statement confirmed the necessity for interventions designed to improve engagement. In response to the open ended questions related to students' strengths and other information the parents wanted to share, several expressed concerns about their children's sensitivity and lack of confidence in new situations or when learning something new.

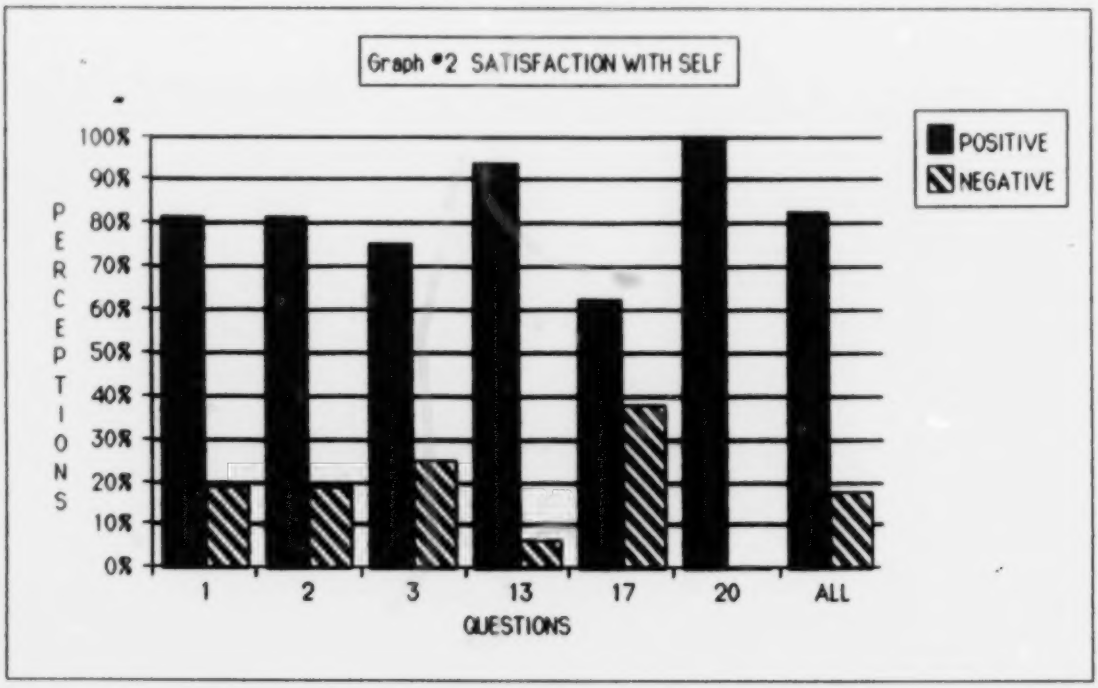
The student questionnaire was administered orally by the classroom teacher who asked individual kindergarten students to simply respond "yes" or "no" to each question.

The following graphs, #1-#5, illustrate the results of the student questionnaire. They show the percentage of students whose responses indicate either negative or positive perceptions regarding school, satisfaction with self, self-efficacy, friendship and belonging.



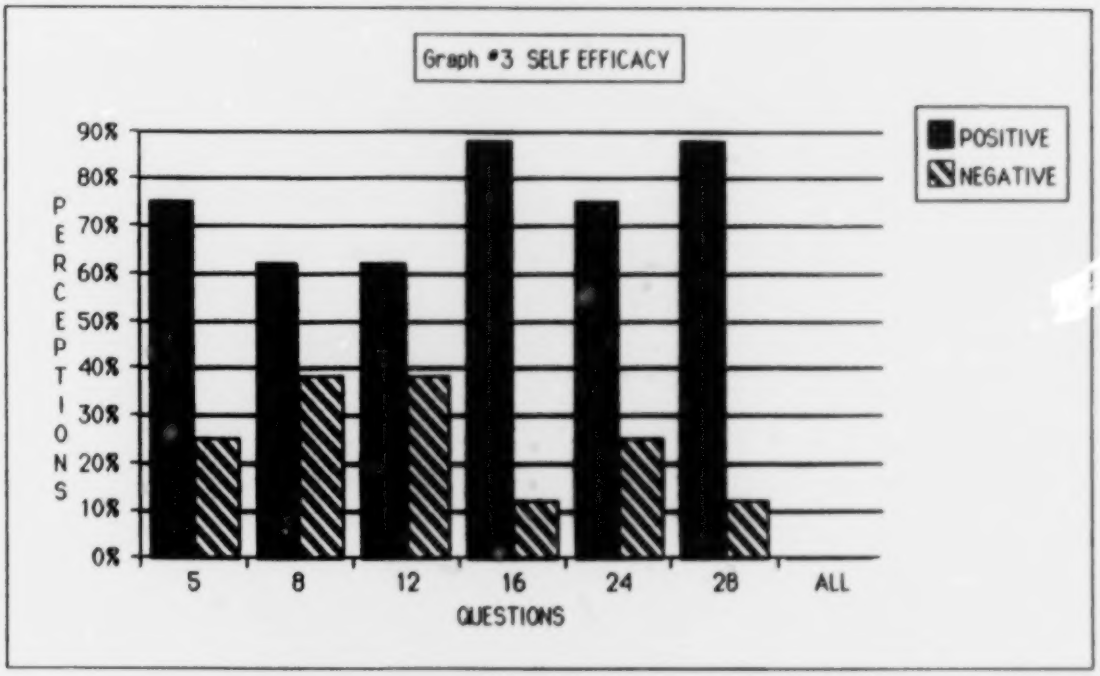
Graph #1 SCHOOL shows that the children are very positive in their attitudes toward school. The only question which elicited a highly negative response was the one that asked if there was enough time to share ideas in school (question #14). In contrast the three questions that received the most positive responses were related to trusting the teacher, finding things to do in school and having enough time to learn things in school (questions #15, 7, and 29).

The satisfaction with self questions were designed to determine whether the students' general attitudes toward themselves are positive or negative. Whereas questions related to self-efficacy were designed in an attempt to discern the students' sense of competence and confidence.

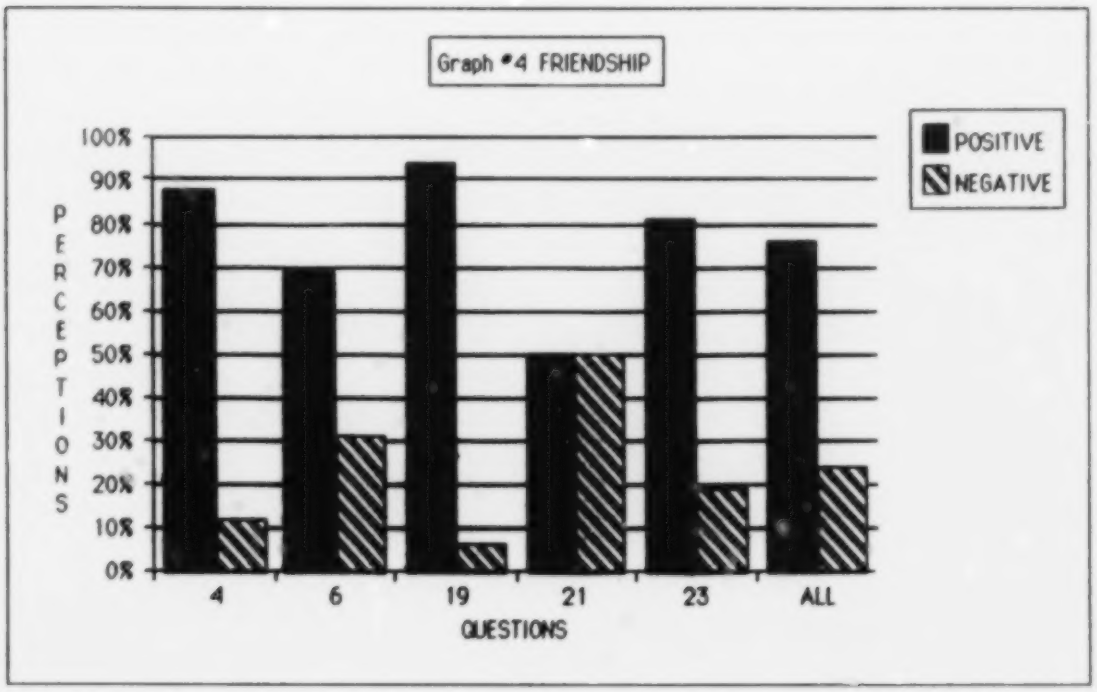


Graph #2 SATISFACTION WITH SELF shows a generally high level of satisfaction with self. However, 25 percent of the students do indicate feelings of sadness and difficulties with self acceptance. It also shows some contradictory responses. The students were 100 percent positive regarding "feeling proud of themselves and their accomplishments" (question #20) while almost 40 percent of these same students wished they were different. (question #17) Further informal inquiry showed a focus on particular issues, " I want to be ten years old," and like responses.

The information gleaned from the section on self-efficacy is extremely important because as will be discussed in Chapter Three, self-efficacy has a significant impact on levels of engagement.



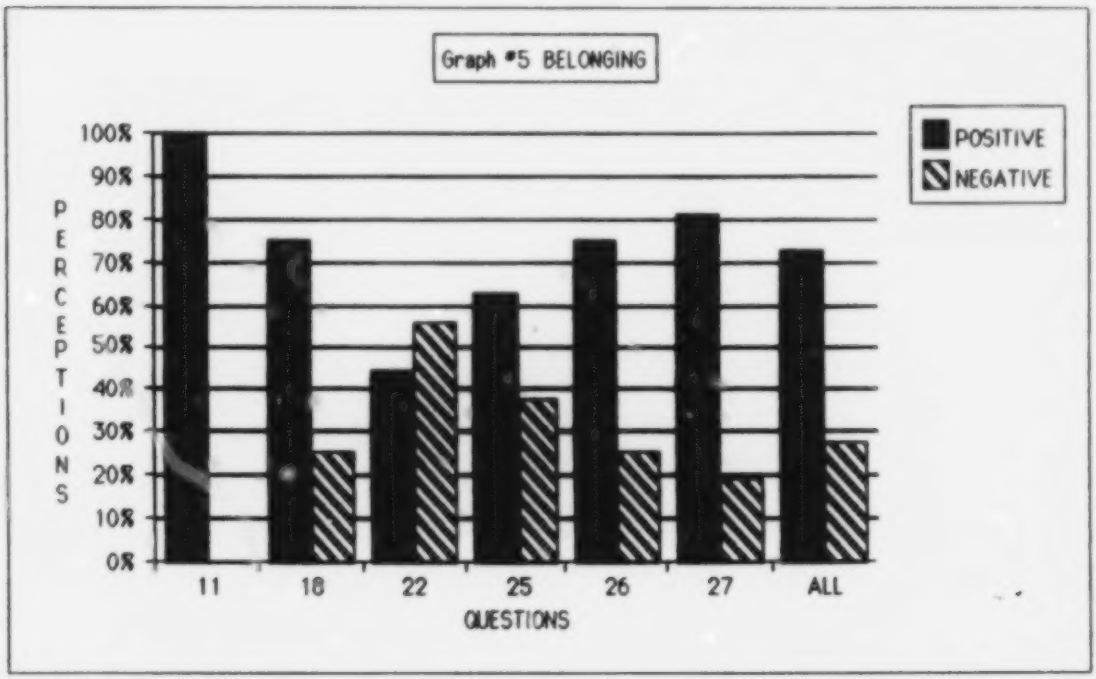
Graph #3 SELF-EFFICACY indicates that at least one quarter of the students have some difficulty with feeling competent and confident. The most negative responses were to questions about being worried in school (question #8) and blaming themselves when things go wrong (question #12). One quarter of the students responded negatively about liking to try new things (question #24) and whether they were as smart as other students (question #5).



Graph #4 FRIENDSHIP provides information regarding generalized perceptions about how the children deal with friendship in a variety of contexts. Whereas the belonging questions referred to the students' perception of belonging in school both in social and academic activities. Even though over three fourths of the students indicate positive perceptions of friendship, the questions that revealed negative perceptions are worthy of further exploration. About one third of the students responses indicate that it is hard for them to make friends. One fifth of the students perceive themselves as not having a lot of friends.

Interestingly, one half of the students said they usually want their own way and the other half said they don't usually want their own way (question

#21). This is a typical attitude observed in this age group.



Graph #5 BELONGING contains powerful implications for student engagement. Over one fourth of the students' perceptions are negative regarding their sense of belonging. Well over one half of the students find it difficult to get into a group (question #22) and over one third of the students feel left out (question #25). Similarly, nearly one fourth of the students don't like working in groups (question #26) and feel that people pick on them (question #18).

Clearly, negative perceptions regarding belonging impact on self-esteem and engagement. Students whose questionnaire indicated lack of engagement as indicated by possible difficulties with self acceptance, competence and

confidence, trying new things, getting into a group, and feeling left out clearly require intervention that will be aimed at improving engagement.

Evanston Site

To verify the existence of and extent to which the problem of engagement exists, a student questionnaire was administered, a parent survey was taken and behavioral checklists were used.

Behavioral checklists highlighting specific engagement behaviors were utilized in the classroom. Observations were done for two social studies, two science, and two homeroom classes (total of six observations) during a two week period. Activities included whole class instruction, cooperative group activities, working with partners, and independent assignments.

Overall results indicate that one-fourth of the targeted groups demonstrate positive engagement behaviors, including categories of close physical proximity, high levels of participation and interest, and attention to task. One-third of the students are considered "average" because of the variations of tallies between the three categories and the nature of the setting. For example, some students were engaged in most areas during a science experiment but less engaged during a cooperative group social studies lesson. Forty-one percent of the students are considered not engaged.

Of this group, ten students were cause for considerable concern. There was consistent evidence of negative physical proximity behaviors, coupled with minimal attention to tasks or participation in activities. Important factors to

keep in mind are that of these ten students, four are new to the school, including two boys whose first language is not English. Future checklist observations will be of value in determining if these students' levels of engagement improve as a result of the implementation strategies.

Of the twenty-four parent surveys sent out, 75 percent were completed and returned to the teacher. As reflected in Chart 1, parents' perceptions have an overall positive rating (75 percent).

Chart 1
Percentages of Positive Responses
By Parents Regarding Student Engagement

Question	Positive
#1	100%
#2	83%
#3	94%
#4	33%
#5	72%
#6	67%

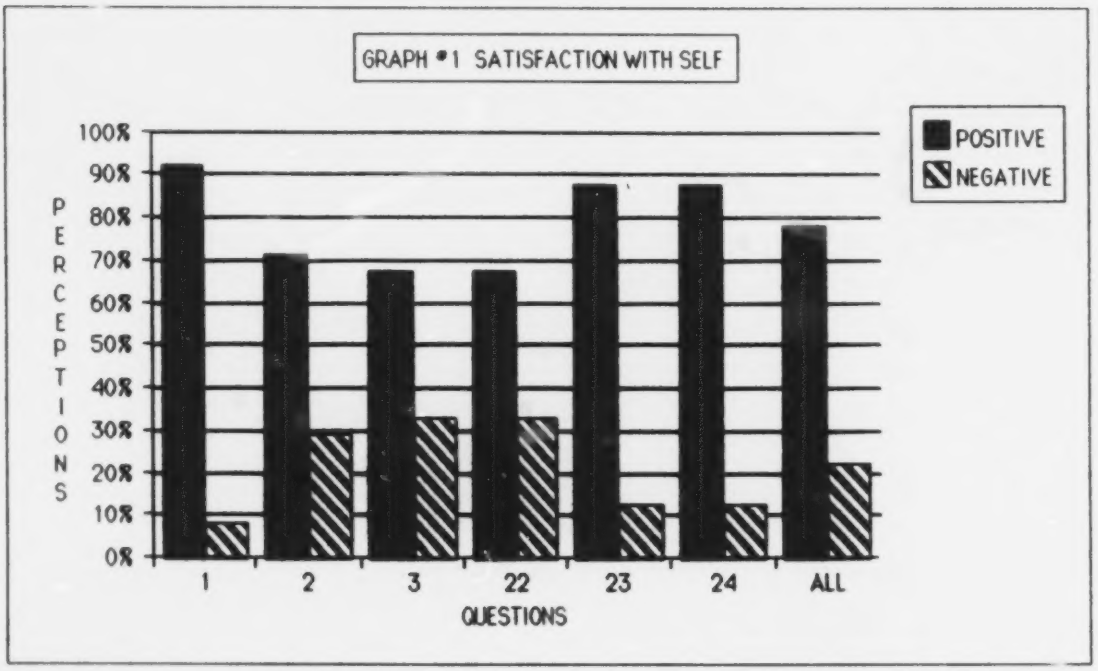
Students giving up on difficult tasks (#4), not having a sense of belonging (#6), and setting and pursuing goals (#5) address issues of self-efficacy. The percent of negative responses indicate the need for intervention in helping students gain a more positive sense of who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing. Looking forward to school (#1) and getting involved in

activities (#3) are two assets which can be used to the teacher's advantage in developing a successful program. Responses to children taking risks (#2) were quite positive.

Some of the comments from the two open-ended questions supported the above results: "...he is not afraid to work hard"; "risk taker...loves to learn anything and everything"; and "...has a desire to achieve his goals". Other comments, though not specific to the problem of engagement, gave insightful information about the whole child.

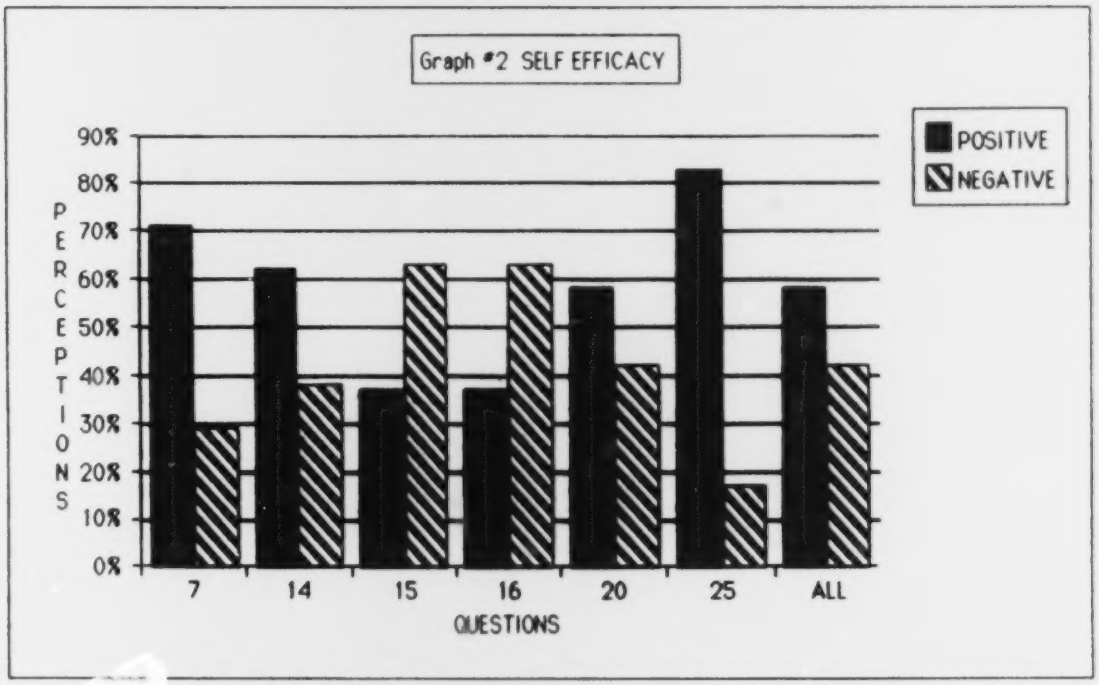
The student questionnaire consisted of 35 statements dealing with five major areas of focus: satisfaction with self, self-efficacy, friendship, belonging, and attitude towards school. The targeted twenty-four students recorded their responses on the Likert scales provided for each item as the teacher read each item aloud. These ratings were then converted into positive and negative responses for analysis purposes. The following graphs, #1-#5, illustrate the results of the student questionnaire. They show the percentage of students whose responses indicate either positive or negative perceptions.

The satisfaction with self questions were designed to determine whether the students' general attitudes towards themselves were positive or negative.



Graph #1 SATISFACTION WITH SELF shows that three out of the six questions regarding satisfaction with self were very positive. They included students' sense of how they looked (statement #1), not wishing to be different from who they are now (statement #23) and a sense of pride and accomplishment (statement #24). Results of three other questions were significantly negative: being good at a lot of things (statement #2), being sad (statement #3) and feeling that they were easy to get along with (statement #22). These three factors would have an affect on a students' success or failure in a cooperative learning situation.

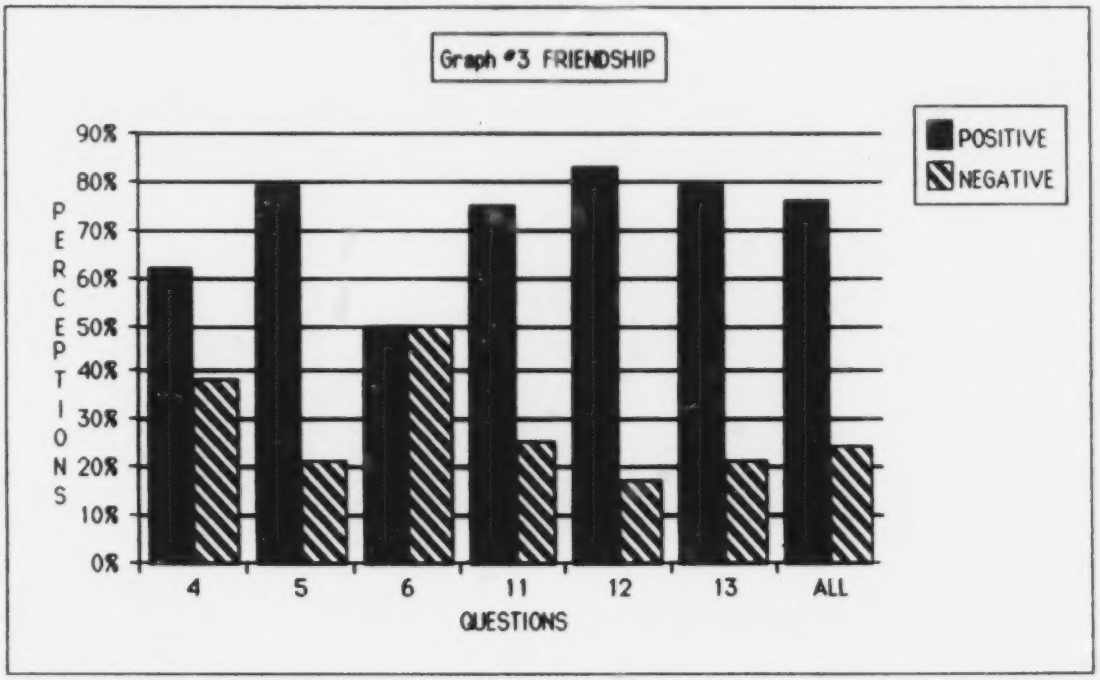
Questions illustrated in Graph #2 SELF EFFICACY were designed to discern the students' sense of competence and confidence within the school setting.

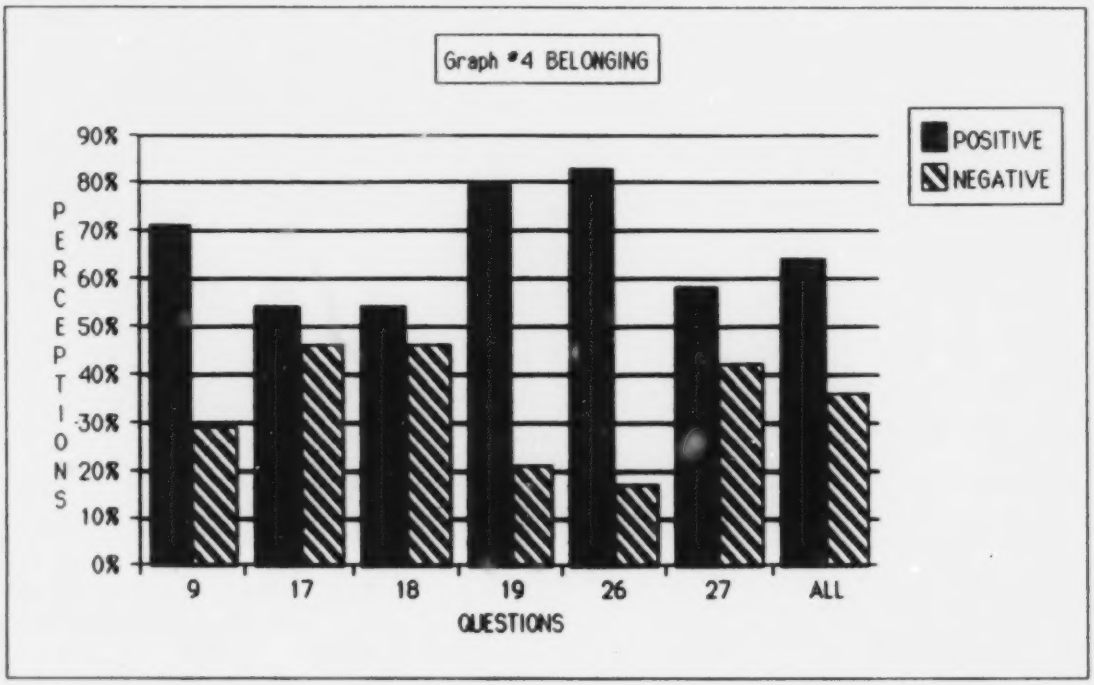


Responses in this area overall, resulted in only a 16 percent difference between positive and negative perceptions. Outstanding were the negative responses students had about feeling comfortable in talking in front of the class (statement #15) and trying new things (statement #16). These can be identified as risk taking behaviors. Giving up when things go wrong (statement #14) and not being as smart as others (statement #20) were two areas which also reflected a significant level of negative perception. These personal variables coupled with the risk taking behaviors definitely affect the students' level of engagement.

The following two graphs present students' perceptions in the areas of

friendship and belonging. In Graph #3 FRIENDSHIP, the questions provide information regarding generalized perceptions about how students deal with friendships in a variety of contexts. The belonging questions shown on Graph #4 BELONGING referred to the students' perception of belonging in school both in social and academic situations. It is interesting to note the relationship between the two categories.

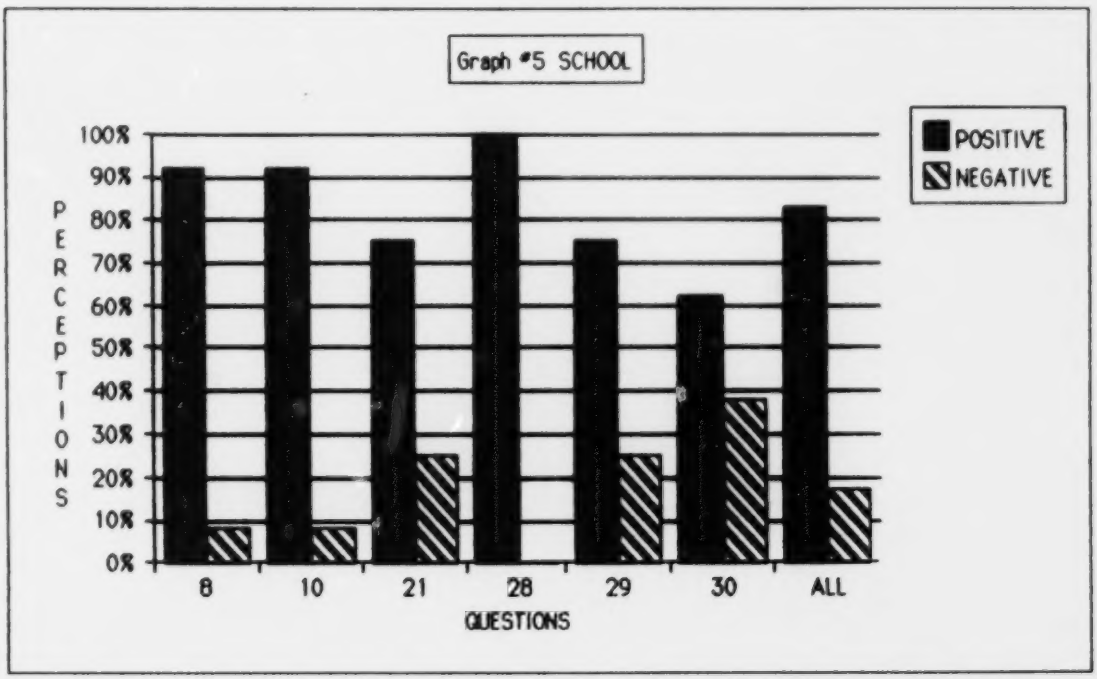




It appears that the students have significantly positive perceptions as indicated by their responses to items such as being comfortable in school (statement #19), being with other students (statement #12), being with students of different cultures (statement #5), having friends (statement #11), and participating in game activities (statement #26). However, difficulty in making friends (statement #6), being comfortable playing with others (statement #9), and feeling left out (statement #17) point towards the possibility that the students lack confidence in their relationships with others. This is supported by the negative responses to the issues of getting into a group (statement #27), and not liking group work (statement #18). It is not surprising that 38 percent of the students responded negatively to the statement about

others thinking that they have good ideas (statement #4). These factors point to social skills that need to be addressed. Developing strategies and providing time for students to practice these skills will enhance their level of engagement.

Graph #5 SCHOOL shows that of all the categories, school environment had the greatest positive perceptions by the students.



Seeing the environment as a non-competitive setting (statement #8), feeling comfortable with the teacher (statement #10), and demonstrating a desire to learn (statement #28), are factors which enable students to engage successfully. Perceptions about school work being interesting (statement #21), learned work yielding new ideas for thought (statement #29), and having enough

time to share ideas (statement #30) reflect a 20 percent or more negative perception. It will be interesting to note how much these factors limit the engagement levels of the students as recorded in the behavioral checklists.

In viewing total responses, 23 items indicated a negative perception of 20 percent or more and at first glance, positive responses dominate the results. However, with careful scrutiny it should be noticed that only 10 out of the 35 items resulted in 80 percent or better positive perceptions. Though the targeted third grade students have indicated overall positive perceptions, it is clearly evident that specific areas need to be addressed.

Probable Causes
Northbrook Site

In analyzing the community setting it is apparent that the general population is affluent, highly educated and that many community facilities are available. While these factors are certainly positive, one possible negative outcome is that the majority of preschoolers are enrolled in highly organized play, sports and nursery school settings. Settings that do not accommodate young children's natural inclination to explore, problem solve, and express creativity limit students' developing ability to make choices. Consequently there is the potential danger that the children are exposed to environments that could compromise their developing sense of competence, confidence and ownership. These attributes are critical components of engagement.

Another site based probable cause is that the transition from home or

nursery school to kindergarten is of major consequence. Since the physical setting is new for all the students there are many adjustments: the student-adult ratio is increased; students interact with P.E., music, art, library and computer specialist in addition to the classroom teacher. Parent interviews have confirmed some of the children have been in play groups and nursery school together for two to three years. Others have had no association with any of the children.

All of these factors can have major effects on the children's sense of belonging, friendships, competence and confidence which significantly affect engagement.

The class's ethnic composition reflects the population of the community at large. The majority of the students, 81 percent, are white of European descent. One child is Mexican American, one Philippino/Caucasian and one Asyrian. One child also represents a lower socio-economic status. It is conceivable that the levels of engagement of these students are affected by their differences.

Evanston Site

Information gleaned from the immediate site and community setting provide possible factors which influence students' levels of engagement. Of the 349 students at Lincoln, fifty are third graders assigned to two homeroom classes. The class sizes of 24 and 26 can present difficulties of engagement if students do not have skills or strategies to participate in large class settings

or group activities. The teacher-student ratio of one-to-25 would also affect the amount of time individual students and the teacher interact on a daily basis. The make up of the class presents a diverse group of cultures including, nine African American students, ten children of European descent, one Russian, one Chinese, one Serbo-Croatian, one Japanese/Caucasian American, and one Hispanic American. This cultural diversity presents a variety of behaviors which can affect perceptions of self and result in a lack of sense of ownership in the school environment.

Since its incorporation as a township in 1863, Evanston has grown into a city with all the advantages and disadvantages of large cities. In this growth and development, complex issues are current and on-going topics of concern. Families deal daily with these issues which can present different philosophies and attitudes in the classroom.

Probable Cause Literature

According to the literature one of the major causes of lack of engagement is the failure to meet children's basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ayan, 1991; Connell and Wellborn as cited in Skinner, 1993; Elkind, 1987; Berry and West, 1993; Harter as cited in Cury and Johnson, 1990). See complete discussion in Chapter Three.

In addition years of research has confirmed that students' lack of ownership has a direct effect on levels of engagement. When children are not

involved in decision making, choices, and are not given time to pursue their interests in learning, ownership, personal investment, and engagement in learning is diminished (Voltz and Damiano-Lantz, 1993; Barclay and Breheny, 1994; Newman, 1989). See Chapter Three for complete discussion.

A third possible cause for lack of engagement cited in the literature is the impact of the environment on students. Research in the 1980s indicate the need for the environment being responsive to students' needs (Gottfried, 1983). The focus of many authorities (Marshall and Weinstein, 1984, Skinner and Belmont, 1983, Fields, 1993, Heroman, 1990) calls for taking a look at the whole environment. This includes the teachers' self-efficacious beliefs and the messages that are conveyed to the students because of these beliefs, as well as physical esthetics of the classroom.

The literature also points out that students who feel "different" from the majority culture represented in the class often find it difficult to be engaged in social and academic activities. Volz and Damiano-Lantz (1993) describe specific strategies for teachers whereby students are made more comfortable about their diversity, are able to recognize that diversity within the classroom and feel a sense of ownership and belonging, thus enabling successful engagement.

Chapter Three

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

The issue of student engagement is a common source of concern and discussion among members of the educational community, parents and students. In the process of exploring the literature for discussions of engagement, the issue continued to be defined in internalized performance variables and environmental terms. Internalized performance variables included motivation, self-efficacy, ownership, locus of control, self-esteem and risk taking. The resources regarding the effect of the environment focused on issues such as, a nurturing climate, celebrating diversity, encouraging student ownership of learning through cooperative groups and extensive exploration of topics.

It was interesting to note that within the literature germane to internalized performance variables and environmental terms, there were recurrent themes which addressed the roles of autonomy and acceptance, the effect of rewards and the impact of the perception of competence.

Intrinsic Motivation

As was stated in Chapter Two, one of the major factors affecting student engagement is intrinsic motivation. For decades psychological and educational research has investigated the factors that contribute to and diminish motivation (Skinner and Belmont, 1993).

"Academic intrinsic motivation involves enjoyment of school learning characterized by a mastery orientation; curiosity; persistence; task endogeny; and the learning of challenging, difficult and novel tasks" (Gottfried, as cited by Gottfried, 1990, p. 525). In her research, Gottfried found that intrinsic motivation proved to be a stronger prediction of later motivation and school success than IQ and academic achievement (Gottfried, 1990). A subsequent study again confirmed that academic intrinsic motivation predicted motivation and achievement. It also provided evidence that mothers socialized intrinsic motivation through the encouragement of curiosity, persistence and mastery of school related activities. (Gottfried, 1994). These studies helped to frame the importance of developing intrinsic motivation in young children because they showed that intrinsic motivation demonstrated at an early age predicts future motivation. The latter study also provided directions for teachers of young children by illustrating the positive effect that the encouragement of curiosity, persistence and mastery (task endogeny) had on intrinsic motivation.

In order to facilitate the development of intrinsic motivation it is important for the educator to be aware of the variety of schools of thought that

address the development of intrinsic motivation.

Cognitive theorists believe that when children are faced with new experiences that challenge their current cognitive level, they are pushed to explore, manipulate and investigate possible solutions to resolve their conceptual conflict. The cognitive processing required produces intrinsic motivation. (Gottfried, 1983). According to competence theorists, childrens' attempts to master their environment is the core of intrinsic motivation. Persistence, selectivity and exploration engenders a sense of mastery and feelings of efficacy (White as cited by Gottfried, 1983). Attribution theorists believe that when children attribute the cause of their behavior to their own efforts, competence or selection of goals their intrinsic motivation is enhanced.

It is self-determination theory (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan, 1991) that suggests that social contexts which support people being competent, related, and autonomous will promote motivated action. Support for autonomy facilitates motivated action being self-determined rather than controlled. "To the extent that social contexts do not allow satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, they will diminish motivation, impair the natural development process, and lead to alienation and poorer performance" (Deci, et al., 1991). Self-determination theory suggests that motivation is enhanced when support for competence and relatedness is present. Optimal challenges and positive feedback support competence and parental involvement and peer acceptance support relatedness.

These supports facilitate intrinsic motivation when they are accompanied by autonomy rather than controlling contexts.

Katz and Chard (1990) discuss the fact that parents and educators generally maintain that the outcomes of education should include habits of mind or dispositions related to curiosity, creativity, resourcefulness, independence, initiative, responsibility, involvement and interest. The disposition of interest is seen as an outcome similar to that of intrinsic motivation. Interest is defined as the ability to lose oneself in an activity.

> We use it to refer to the disposition to pursue an activity or goal in the absence of expected rewards. We include the tendency to become deeply absorbed enough in an activity to pursue it over an extended period of time, with sufficient commitment to accept its routine as well as novel aspects (Katz and Chard, 1990, p. 32).

In an extensive review of the research on the effects of feedback and rewards on interest and motivation, Katz and Chard (1990) conclude that rewards diminish satisfaction in activities. They maintain that rewards have a negative effect on children's beliefs about their effort. Rewards cause children to attribute their effort to outside factors whereas in the absence of obvious rewards children can attribute their effort to forces within themselves and to their own initiative (Hunter and Barker as cited by Katz and Chard, 1990).

Research findings indicate that rewards have complex effects on intrinsic motivation, and whether a given reward increases or decreases intrinsic

motivation depends on its meaning to the child. Rewards that enhance childrens' perception of competence, or their self-determination in choosing the activity, facilitate subsequent intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, Lepper, Pittman, Boggiano, and Ruble, as cited by Gottfried, 1983).

Self-Efficacy

Historically, the focus on student achievement has been from the vantage of cognitive functioning, how people process information (Bandura, 1993). In much of the literature intrinsic motivation, classroom environment, instructional methods and the use of rewards are described as factors which determine or affect the level of participation and engagement by students.

Since the late 1970s and early '80s there has been an interest in addressing personal cognitions and their effect on achievement behavior. "Effective intellectual functioning requires much more than simply understanding the factual knowledge and reasoning operations for given activities. The self-regulatory social, motivational, and affective contributors to cognitive functioning are best addressed within the conceptual framework of the exercise of human agency" (Bandura, 1993, p. 117). "The ways that students process information in learning situations seem fruitful to explore, because instructional procedures alone cannot fully account for students' diverse achievement patterns" (Schunk, 1984, p. 48). Theories and research by Bandura, Covington and Beery, Harter, and Weiner, to name a few, have shown that

personal cognitions exert important effects on achievement behaviors (Schunk, 1984).

The concept of perceived self-efficacy was introduced in 1977 by Albert Bandura. Self-efficacy is defined as "an individual's sense of competence and confidence related to performance in a given domain" (Berry and West, 1993, p. 351). More specifically, "Self-efficacy refers to personal judgments of one's capability to organize and implement actions in specific situations that may contain novel, unpredictable, and possibly stressful features" (Bandura, as cited by Schunk, 1984, p. 48). Self-efficacy traits influence a person's choice of activities, how much effort is expended, persistence, and task accomplishments (Schunk, 1984). Self-efficacy

> ...is not a global self-evaluation but instead, is quite tied to particular task demands and characteristics of a given situation. Neither is one's sense of self-efficacy a static, fixed entity; rather, it is dynamic and malleable, subject to changes in task demands, situational determinants, social context, and individual development (Berry and West 1993).

According to Bandura (1993) efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to the level and quality of human functioning. They influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave.

Information about one's level of self-efficacy is acquired from four sources: self performances hypothesize that successes would raise self-efficacy while failures lower it; vicarious experiences involve learning through

the knowledge of others; physiological symptoms (e.g. sweaty palms) may indicate to students the inability to do well. However, it's important to note that information acquired from these sources does not automatically influence self-efficacy. The effects of this information on self-efficacy depends on how students appraise the information. Judgments are made taking into account factors such as choice of activities, effort expended, persistence, difficulty of task, and perceived ability.

Attributional variables are another important component in the development of self-efficacy. Theories of attributes hypothesize that students make causal ascriptions for the outcomes of their actions. In the arena of academic achievement students attribute their outcomes to ability, effort, task difficulty and luck (Frieze, Weiner, Weiner et al., as cited by Schunk, 1984). Studies have explored the effects of effort attributional feedback.

Effort is viewed as the one variable that is controlled by will and therefore possible to change. The hypothesis is that ascribing past failures to lack of effort will exert motivation. More effort will increase success by focusing the students to stay on task longer and thus increasing their level of performance. Providing effort feedback has been proven to be effective in developing self-efficacy and learning skills of very young children. At this stage they equate ability with effort and view their outcomes very dependent on effort (Schunk, 1984a). Studies by Schunk provide evidence that students' concept of ability begins to shift at age nine. Ability attributes become more

important in development while effort attributes become less important. At the third grade level, development of higher self-efficacy is associated more with higher skills and ability (Schunk, 1984b).

Further studies by Schunk reveal relevant information regarding student achievement behaviors. The sequence of attributional feedback and their influence on students' motivation, attributions, self-efficacy and skillful performance was addressed. In general, these results indicated that ability attributions were more effective than initial effort attributions and ability attributions result in high expectations for future success. Findings by Frieze and Harari & Covington indicate that students value high effort as a cause of success especially when perceptions of high ability is present (Schunk, 1984).

Just as in motivation, the theme of rewards have warranted implications in the development of self-efficacy. Analysis from a variety of sources indicate the need for a careful implementation in distributing rewards.

Hunter and Baker (1987) find that students are less able to recognize responsibility for their outcomes as their own if extrinsic rewards are over emphasized in the classroom (Katz and Chard, 1989). Experiments by Groves, Sawyer and Morgan (1987) revealed that rewards can be detrimental to creative functioning (Katz and Chard, 1989).

The use of rewards presents a notable correlation with students' spontaneity and interest in tasks. Recent research indicates that initial and spontaneous interest are diminished when rewards are given. Students think

that it must be wrong to like doing a task if a reward is given for completing it (Deci and Ryan, as cited by Katz and Chard, 1989). Lepper (1981) describes this phenomenon as "over justification": giving rewards over justifies the satisfaction of a task that is already initially satisfactory for the students (Katz and Chard, 1989). deCharms (1983) notes that general positive feedback ("Very good!") will increase productivity but interest declines (Katz and Chard, 1989). It is further recognized that removal of general feedback lessens the students' willingness to work on tasks. A specific feedback which increases interest in a task is identified as "tributes". General, non-specific feedback which loses the students' interest but increases productivity are "inducements" (Katz and Chard, 1989). In his study addressing rewards and the development of children's skills and self-efficacy, Schunk (1983) found that offering performance-contingent rewards did, in fact, promote students' task accomplishments, percepts of efficacy and skill development. Results also indicated that rewards for participation did nothing more than convey the message that performance was important. If children infer that they must be of low ability because performance expectations are not clear, their percepts of self-efficacy could be weakened.

Self-Esteem

Identifying self-esteem as a factor affecting motivation has opened up an opportunity to see self-esteem in a rich, new context. Curry and Johnson (1990) discussed the fact that rather than being a well defined concept, self-esteem is

understood in the context of three intuitions:

1. How people think and feel themselves is important.
2. Positive self concepts and feelings provide the confidence, energy, and optimism to master life's tasks.
3. Self-esteem is promoted by positive self-experiences.

Because self-esteem is often treated as a fixed entity, it is frequently labeled as an attribute which a person possesses or lacks. Furthermore, there is a common stereotype interpretation that subjects with self-esteem are confident, independent, and outgoing. Those lacking self-esteem are seen as retiring, unsure, and incompetent. In reality, most people fall somewhere on a self-esteem continuum. The position on the continuum rather than being fixed is mobile. According to Harter (1983) as cited in Curry and Johnson (1990) theorists identify four dimensions of self-esteem: acceptance, power and control, moral worth and competence. Self-esteem is "appreciating my own worth and importance, and having character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others" (Vasconcellas, as cited by Silvestri, Dantonio, and Eason, 1994, p. 30).

The relationship between achievement and self-esteem has been studied by many researchers and their findings indicate that though there is a connection between the two, it is uncertain whether self-esteem produces academic achievement or vice versa. Most probably causality operates in both directions (Silvestri, et al.,1994).

Ownership

Maximizing their students' learning potential is the goal of all educators. Facilitating understanding and retention, as well as promoting a desire to learn are the key reasons for developing ownership in learning. "Ownership in learning refers to the development of a sense of connectedness, active involvement and personal investment in the learning process" (Voltz and Damiano-Lantz, 1993, p. 22).

Educators and researchers have addressed the importance of promoting student choice and decision making and providing ample time for students to pursue their own interests (Barclay and Breheny, 1994). Engagement with learning and internalization of knowledge depend on the opportunities students have to "own" work. They must have some influence on the conception, execution and evaluation of the work (Newman, 1989). Flexibility of pace, procedures for learning, opportunities to ask questions and to study topics of interest are basic in transferring ownership to students.

Through years of research it is evidenced that students' engagement and performance in school is significantly affected by their control over academic success and failure. Studies on locus of control, causal attributions, learned helplessness and self-efficacy have provided data supporting the effects of students' perceived control. As cited in an article by Skinner, Wellborn, Connell (1990) students who do well and achieve better grades believe:

Doing well is a result of their own actions (Seligman, 1975).

Grades are caused by internal controllable causes (effort), (Weiner, 1979).

They can produce the responses that lead to desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

They possess high ability (Harter, 1981; Stipek, 1980).

Further research and experimentation explain the "bidirectional" correlations of these beliefs. When students believe they have control over success in school, they perform better on cognitive tasks. With this success they are more likely to view school performance as a controllable outcome (Skinner et al., 1990). This cycle also implies that students who believe they are not doing well in school will perceive themselves as having no control, thus generating performances to confirm their beliefs (Seligman, as cited by Skinner, et al., 1990).

Environment

The environment can have a powerful impact on the development of internalized personal variables. An environment that is responsive to children provides tasks which challenge the child and provides experiences of mastery and effectiveness in the environment (Gottfried, 1983).

Experience indicates that educators' thought processes are the keys to change in education and the keys to school improvement. (Fields, 1993). Educators need to look at the whole classroom environment recognizing the complex interactions and their implications on students' perceptions and evaluation of their environment.

Though classroom settings may appear to be similar in providing an atmosphere conducive to learning (bulletin boards of students' work, activity stations), teacher beliefs greatly affect the messages that are conveyed to students. In classrooms where different students are praised for different types of accomplishments, the distribution of rewards may reflect the teacher's belief in intelligence as a repertoire of skills and knowledge. On the other hand, in environments where the same students receive most of the praise for good performance, high achievers are likely to maintain high self evaluations and low achievers are likely to develop low self evaluations. (Marshall and Weinstein, 1984).

Teacher behaviors greatly affect the fulfillment of children's needs. According to Connell and Wellborn, as cited in Skinner (1993), student engagement is optimized in direct relationship to the fulfillment of children's basic psychological needs to be competent, autonomous, and related to other people. Competence is enhanced when students experience optimal structure in their classrooms. "Teachers provide structure by clearly communicating their expectations, by responding consistently, predictably, and contingently, by offering instrumental help and support, and by adjusting teaching strategies to the level of the child" (Skinner and Belmont, 1983, p. 572). The second psychological need is autonomy in learning. Autonomy is promoted when students experience autonomy support. Autonomy support refers to the amount of freedom for the child to determine behavior. Teachers who allow children

choices in their learning activities and provide connections between school activities and children's interests support autonomy. Thirdly, the child's need for relatedness is met through involvement which refers to the quality of the interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers. "Teachers are involved with their students to the extent that they take time for, express affection toward, enjoy interactions with, are attuned to and dedicate resources to their students" (Skinner and Belmont, 1993, p. 573).

In her research addressing student perceptions of the learning environment, Heroman, (1990) cited the following results. Students had more positive perceptions of the classroom when expectations were clear and the teacher used time efficiently in managing the classroom. Students had more positive perceptions of teachers who provided specific feedback and continuous encouragement. A positive competitive spirit developed among peers when teachers provided appropriate aids and materials.

Educators' behavior is affected by their sense of efficacy. Joseph Fields (1993) states that efficacious teachers set high, clear goals for themselves, orchestrate more effort to succeed, persevere regardless of negative situations or obstacles, are "possibility thinkers", and are less stressed and frustrated.

Multicultural Education

The concept of multicultural education has undergone many transformations since its beginnings in the sixties and seventies. Currently it is viewed by many advocates in the field in a broad and inclusive framework. It

is seen as a philosophy and a way of looking at the world. When multicultural education is seen in this context it goes far beyond the typical *feast and festival* or tourist approach.

It is difficult to define multicultural education because it is a process not a thing or something we "do". According to Perry and Fraser (1993, p. 48) "Multicultural education is the process that honors the multicultural nature of the society in which we live and, as a agent of change, examines the connections between power and knowledge." Perry and Fraser see multicultural education as a complex system of education which: promotes cultural pluralism and social equality; reflects diversity in all areas of the school environment; reflects the diversity of American society; teaches an unbiased inclusive curriculum; ensures equitable resources and programs for all students; and ensures equitable academic excellence for all students.

James Banks (1993 a) identifies the five following dimensions of multicultural education. He believes that it is important for teachers to use realistic images and content from a variety of cultures. He refers to this process as Content Integration. Through Knowledge Construction teachers help students recognize how knowledge is influenced by factors of race, ethnicity, gender and social class. By focusing on the characteristics of children's racial attitudes and on effective strategies to help students develop positive racial and ethnic attitudes, teachers contribute to Prejudice Reduction. Equity Pedagogy is practiced when teachers endeavor to use techniques that cater to

the learning and cultural styles of diverse groups. Co-operative learning has been identified as an effective strategy to use with students from diverse racial ethnic, and language groups. (Shade cited in Banks, 1993). Teachers can have a powerful impact on creating an Empowering School Culture. By being sensitive to grouping and labeling practices, seeing the school as an agent of change and promoting structural changes within the school environment teachers can assist students from diverse racial, ethnic, gender, and social class to experience educational equality and a sense of empowerment.

Banks and McGee Banks (1993) summarize multicultural education by stating that it is "at least three three things: and idea or concept, an educational reform movement and a process."

Willis (1993) states that the most often cited goals of multicultural education include teaching more accurate and inclusive information, reducing prejudice and promoting tolerance, improving the academic success of minority students, building commitment to the American ideals of democracy and pluralism and promoting actions that will turn those ideals into reality.

Perhaps the socio-political context of Sonia Nieto"s (1993) vision of multicultural education most comprehensively defines its essence. She identifies seven basic characteristic of multicultural education.

It is basic education. In today's world multicultural literacy must be seen as essential as reading, writing, arithmetic and computer literacy. If it is not seen as part of the core curriculum it will be perceived as unimportant.

It is pervasive. It permeates the physical environment of the classroom, the curriculum, and the relationships among teachers, students and the community.

It is education for social justice. It encourages expansive and inclusive thinking which leads to reflection on what is learned and how to put the learning into action.

It is anti-racist. It legitimizes talking about racism and discrimination. It points out that the primary victims of racism are those who suffer its consequences but it also on how destructive and demeaning racism and discrimination are to everyone.

It is critical pedagogy. Students are taught to see the complexity of the world which reinforces the idea that there is not only one way of seeing things. It encourages students to be curious, question and to take risks. It acknowledges and values diversity, encourages critical thinking, reflection and action.

It is important for all students. It is expansive. It is for all people regardless of ethnicity, language, religion, gender, race or class.

It is a process. It is ongoing and dynamic. No one ever stops being a multicultural person, and knowledge is never complete. It involves relationships among people. Most importantly, it focuses on intangibles such as teachers' expectations, learning environments, students' learning styles, and other cultural variables that are essential for student success.

The Multicultural Classroom

Creating a multicultural classroom is not an easy task but one which is worth the effort in helping children develop to their fullest potential.

> The richness and beauty of the world takes many forms...When we bring bits and pieces of the world into the daily life of our programs; the unfamiliar becomes familiar; what was outside our experience becomes part of our frame of reference. From that point on we have real objects and experiences that serve as a basis for asking questions and initiating conversations (Neugebauer, 1992, p. 16).

Research on children's identity and attitudes reveal some interesting information. From a very young age children begin to notice differences and build classificatory and evaluative categories. For example, at 2 1/2 years of age children are learning correct use of gender labels and color names. There are clear developmental tasks and stages in the construction of identity and attitudes. Children begin to wonder about attributes of their selfhood. Societal stereotyping and bias influence children's self concept and attitudes towards others. Three year olds show signs of being influenced when they exhibit "pre-prejudice" towards others on the basis of gender and race (Derman-Sparks,1989). Multicultural education includes a variety of levels of attitudes and behaviors. Nieto (1992) classifies them into four levels: tolerance; acceptance; respect; and affirmation, solidarity and critique. These arbitrary classifications are guidelines for understanding how multicultural education is

manifested in schools. Knowing this, it is important for educators to realize the implications for schools and teachers in giving children the skills and knowledge and critical awareness to become productive members of a diverse and democratic society. Nieto (1992) describes multicultural education as a process which is on going and a critical pedagogy which is always changing and dynamic.

The challenge for creating a multicultural and anti-bias environment involves educators taking a close look at three key components: personal goals, their implementation of the curriculum and the physical environment of their classrooms. In her book, Affirming Diversity (1992), Sonia Nieto details the following strategies. Teachers need to make a commitment to increase their awareness of their own attitudes and biases, learn how to become a multicultural person, and see reality from a variety of perspectives. Differences and similarities need to be an explicit part of the curriculum. There must be careful scrutiny of the present curriculum and careful planning for further implementation. The physical setting of the classroom must include a variety of artifacts and mediums to express diversity.

Other authorities on multicultural education provide supporting insights. Cited in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Curriculum Update, Diane Boardley-Subersees the necessity for teachers to know what is essential about students' cultural backgrounds. Careful interpretations of their students' behaviors is crucial. Being aware of how

students interpret the teachers' behaviors is equally important. In all areas of the curriculum teachers can present diverse perspectives through literature, that is, words written by and about people from a variety of cultural groups (ASCD Curriculum Update, 1993). "Children need to see themselves in books. It's very important to attend to that first (Pat Crook as cited in ASCD Curriculum Update, 1993). Banks, as cited by Fry, McKinney & Phillips (1994) describes four levels of integrating multicultural content into the curriculum: level 1, the contributions approach; level 2, the additive approach; level 3, the transformation approach; and level 4, the social action approach. Most multicultural education programs function at levels 1 and 2 where basic curriculum remains unchanged, people from diverse groups are recognized for their contributions and information about cultures is added to the curriculum. It should be the goal of educators to achieve levels 3 and 4 where changes in the curriculum are made to provoke attitudinal changes and students are encouraged to make decisions and take social action.

What teachers provide in the classroom environment alerts children to what the teacher considers important or not important. "What isn't seen can be as powerful a contributor to attitudes as what is seen" (Derman-Sparks, 1989, p. 11). Images of diverse groups, images that reflect the daily lives of the people, and a balance of images represented (elderly and young, men and women, various family styles), are visual and aesthetic factors important in creating a multicultural classroom (Derman-Sparks, 1989).

Nieto (1992) suggests that educators "begin small" using experiences and understandings that students bring to the classroom. Being sensitive to bicultural moments, recognizing one's own culture as well as learning about another's, is the beginning for a more wide ranging multicultural education.

The following literature citations are directly related to the specific solution components which have been selected.

Classroom Environment

A simple, yet possibly the most effective, starting point for creating a visual and aesthetic environment is with the students in the class. An abundance of images of these children and their families are easy to exhibit. Photos of staff members should be equally displayed. Images should reflect people's daily lives in working and recreational activities. From the personal level, students can then be exposed to famous people with diverse backgrounds. Positive images of people, past and present, reinforces the concept of diversity (Summarized from Derman-Sparks, et al, (1989).

Materials utilized in the classroom should contain regularly available materials reflecting the students' families' backgrounds. Use of other artifacts can then be expanded upon when addressing major groups in the community and the nation (Derman-Sparks, et al, 1989). Models created by students, maps, flags, and bulletin boards featuring multicultural themes are specific visuals that are important elements in creating a multicultural environment.

The fine arts contribute a great deal in the development of an esthetically

diverse environment. Music, art and drama activities can be utilized directly in academic lessons and used as a part of daily life in the room. For example, music from different cultures can be played as background music during quiet work times or activity periods. Paintings, sculpture and children's art work can be exhibited throughout the classroom to develop an appreciation for the variety of mediums representing diverse cultural styles. When teachers are keenly aware of the many ways beyond the established curriculum in which they can successfully demonstrate a multicultural climate, they will be encouraging knowledge and respect for all the people of the world (Finnimore as cited in the NEA Early Childhood Education series, 1992).

Making Similarities and Differences An Explicit Part of the Curriculum

It is important to use human similarities and differences as an explicit part of the curriculum. Discussing physical characteristics is a natural place to begin. Children can observe eye and skin color as well as hair color and texture. Teachers can provide supplies such as paint, crayons, paper, and markers that are available in various flesh tones. By using actual photographs of class members as well as pictures of people from all over the world students can participate in activities such as matching skin tones, creating art work and discussing the scientific and health reasons for skin pigmentation. These simple strategies make a powerful statement that "school" affirms and celebrates diversity (Nieto, 1992).

Parents and other community members are invaluable resources for exploring diversity. Nieto (1992) encourages teachers to invite adults into the classroom to share activities, materials, and aspects of their life that affirm the diversity of daily life. By sharing family artifacts, language, work of members, food, music, and stories the real diversity of life is celebrated.

Children's literature provides powerful material for discussing the very real and similar feelings that people from all cultures experience. There are numerous picture books for primary age children that depict non-stereotypical cultural, racial, gender and social class diversity (Vold, 1992; Wellhousen, 1994; Fry et al., 1994).

In recommendations made by the 1988 Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary School Children, "Preparing for the 21st Century", the National Council for Social Studies states the importance of appreciating and teaching diversity:

> Although not uniquely in social studies, children can achieve a positive self-concept with the context of understanding the similarities and differences of people. Children need to understand that they are unique in themselves but share many similar feeling and concerns with other children (cited in Fry et al. 1994).

Providing Opportunities for Sharing Individual Cultures

According to Derman-Sparks, individual cultures should first be explored

within the context of the family. Culture is lived every day through the way families interact: through language, stories, work, food and play. Since all families have their own "culture" it is appropriate to study the families of all class members. Through this process cultural diversity will be explored in a natural and authentic way. Gradually students can be encouraged to talk more about their culture. In this way students' cultures become visible, affirmed, valued and celebrated in the school (Nieto; 1992).

Strategies To Promote Ownership

The physical environment sets the tone for learning in the classroom. By engaging students in creating the physical environment and aspects of self-management the teacher can promote the goal of developing ownership in learning (Voltz and Damiano-Lantz, 1993). Specific strategies for creating the physical environment include establishing a student directed bulletin board and soliciting students input regarding the arrangement of work space. Management procedures include involving students in establishing classroom rules and consequences. By taking ownership of the rules students will see their necessity in providing an environment for success (Voltz and Damiano-Lantz, 1993).

At an individual level, portfolios, learning logs and response journals can be utilized in the classroom. Kay Burke (1993) cites Wolf, Vavrus, Paulson et al, and Lazear as recommending the use of portfolios for a variety of reasons including: as a means for providing students opportunities to set future goals,

involving students in making critical choices of what goes into their portfolios, and providing opportunities for students to monitor their progress. Learning logs and journals are objective and subjective formats where students can record factual information and keep records, record questions and express opinions and feelings, record reactions and reflect on personal experiences and make connections between what is learned in the class and real life (Burke, 1993). These models explicitly make students aware of their learning, necessitating their engagement which leads to developing their sense of ownership.

Assessing their own work is another way for students to take ownership of their learning. Again, portfolios is an organized system enabling students to reflect on their work. It can be a valuable tool enabling students to discuss their progress with teachers and providing a documented account of their abilities. Bonnie Byrne (Authentic Assessment class, March 15, 1994) described the use of mini tags students use to label their portfolio items. Comments like, "I like this project because..." and "This is my best work because..." require the students to take responsibility in assessing their work.

In their research on classroom factors that contribute to the development of students' self evaluation Marshall and Weinstein (1984) refer to locus of responsibility for evaluation. They describe evaluation as a continuum where on the one end students simply check answers for their work against an answer key. On the other end of the continuum students decide if they have met their

pre-set standards of evaluation. Research by Harter (1981) as cited by Marshall and Weinstein (1984) indicates that students use external criteria in grades three through nine. However, when students are encouraged to evaluate themselves it becomes a private process utilizing many criteria, thus relieving external evaluative pressures.

Cooperative Learning and Self-esteem

According to Johnson, Johnson, Holubec and Roy (1984) cooperative learning promotes feelings of acceptance, realistic views of one's self, basic self acceptance and high self-esteem. Since cooperative learning leads to positive interaction among students, intrinsic learning motivation and involvement in learning are developed to a high degree (Johnson, cited in Bellanca and Fogarty, 1991). Through the concept of positive interdependence (Johnson et. al 1984) students experience a "we did it" attitude. The cooperative group's sense of interdependence and eventual ownership can be achieved by accomplishing mutual goals, dividing the tasks among members, dividing material, resources or information, assigning different roles and celebrating the accomplishments of the group. Since all members share responsibility for performing leadership roles and all members share the responsibility for the success of each individual the group literally owns its efforts and accomplishments.

The Project Approach

As a way of learning, the project approach emphasizes childrens' active participation in their own studies. A project is an in-depth study of a particular topic that can be undertaken by an individual or a group of students. Depending upon circumstances, children may elect to begin a project that is of interest to them or they may choose from a range of options provided by the teacher. All projects should be set in meaningful contexts so that students can actively apply skills that they have acquired such as observing, exploring, investigating, reading, recording, discussing and evaluating their own progress and outcomes (Katz and Chard, 1989).

In their book Engaging Childrens' Minds, Katz and Chard (1989) state that the "overall aim of the project approach is to fully cultivate the life of the young child's mind including knowledge and skills, emotional, moral and aesthetic sensibilities." They maintain that project work is well suited to primary age students because it encourages them to question and to try to make sense of the world around them. In their view, a developmentally appropriate curriculum should focus on intellectual goals. Children's minds should be engaged in pursuits that deepen their understanding of their experiences and environment.

Through the project approach children, experience the class as a community. Teachers play a major role in supporting children's developing sense of belonging to the group and contributing to its life when they expect and

encourage children to be engaged in project work.

The project approach also focuses on developing life long dispositions toward learning. The dispositions of curiosity, resourcefulness, initiative and responsibility contribute to one's sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Because the childrens' point of view, feelings, opinions and choices are taken seriously and treated respectfully, students develop a sense of their own worth and competence.

Because the project approach provides children with many opportunities to make choices, their sense of ownership is increased. In some instances the options are significantly open while others may require negotiation with the teacher. Katz and Chard (1989) see the choices as falling under categories such as : what work to do; when to work; where to work; and choice of co-workers. Teacher support is given to facilitate choice making, but students are encouraged to make judgments. When mistakes are made, they also are encouraged to see them as opportunities to learn and grow. In his research on how to engage students in learning, Vito Perrone (1994) outlines major stages in developing lessons which can be applied to the project approach. The teacher initially evaluates goals and shares them with students. The teacher then focuses on the content of the project generating a variety of topics. Mapping strategies are uses to visualize possible themes. Selections of a few themes for in-depth concentration leaves room for students choices, inquiry and interpretation based on their curiosity and the relevancy to their lives.

Project Outcomes

Solution strategies suggested by the literature, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of the following two major categories of intervention: creating a learning environment in which students accept and develop an appreciation for diversity; and using a variety of teaching strategies through which students' sense of ownership, self-efficacy and self-esteem will be enhanced. These interventions will be implemented during the period of October 1994 through February 1995. The students in the targeted kindergarten and third grade classes will increase their levels of engagement in academic and social settings as measured by teacher observations, student surveys, student productivity on assignments and student self evaluations.

Project Outcome #1

Strategic Processes

Teacher will commit to becoming a more multicultural person	Infuse multicultural perspectives within the present academic curriculum	Develop a physical setting that affirms diversity
- teacher will examine own biases and attitudes	- make similarities and differences an explicit part of the curriculum	- display photos and pictures of people representing various cultures
- teacher will commit to examining historic events and the present from a variety of perspectives i.e. in addition to the Eurocentric point of view	- provide opportunities for students to share their individual culture as a point of reference to teach respect and affirmation of cultural differences	- exhibit artifacts from a variety of cultures
	- to utilize parents and other community members as resources in affirming diversity in dai y life	- use the fine arts to stimulate an appreciation for the artistic contributions of different cultures

Project Outcome #2

Strategic Processes

Provide opportunities for the children to take ownership of their classroom environment	Provide activities that contribute to the development of self-efficacy, self esteem and belonging	Provide opportunities for children to take ownership of their learning
- involve students in developing the physical structure of the classroom - elicit students' participation in developing a variety of displays in the classroom - develop a student schedule of responsibilities for classroom management	- implement cooperative learning strategies - apply the extended projects approach	- utilize portfolios, learning logs, response journals - develop project based learning activities - involve students in assessment procedures - use cooperative group strategies

Action Plan
Northbrook Site

I. Affirming diversity through the physical environment of the classroom

Time Frame: October, 1994 through February, 1995

A. Teacher will provide:

1. Posters and photos of people representing a variety of cultures

2. Artifacts from a variety of cultures

3. Artwork of artists from European and non-European traditions

B. Teacher will collect and expose children to music of different cultures

1. African

2. Asian

3. Hispanic

4. European

C. Students will:

1. Design room layout

a. Placement of tables

b. Placement of learning centers

2. Choose and display materials depicting a variety of cultures

3. Create classroom display related to themes and topics being studied

II. Affirming diversity through curriculum

A. Science

1. Study of the Human Body, Similarities and Differences

Time frame: October through December 1994

a. Eyes: Graph student eye color

b. Hair: Explore variety of color and texture

c. Skin tones: compare skin tones and use a variety of multicultural paint, paper, crayons in art projects

d. Height and weight: compare and record

2. Study of animals

Time frame: January through February, 1995

a. Compare animal coverings

b. Compare and contrast animal habitats

c. Discuss differences in family structure and socialization

B. Social Studies

1. Study of the family

Time frame: October, 1994 through February, 1995

a. Parents and students complete a family questionnaire

b. Students will discuss and compare results of questionnaire

c. Find family origin on a world map

d. Pin students' names on map

e. Determine how many countries are represented

f. Storytelling: Children have opportunities to tell a family story that has been passed on to them

g. Students invite a relative to class to share: pictures of

ancestors; tell family stories to the group; bring artifacts

2. Community

a. Discuss topics of work, language, food, recreation and cultural background

b. Invite community members to participate

C. Literature

Time frame: October, 1994 through February, 1995

1. The teacher will create a classroom library of materials including childrens' picture books, video tapes, filmstrips, large picture books depicting people from around the world in order to address the following issues:

a. Self-acceptance

b. Self-esteem

c. Self-efficacy

d. Feelings

e. Physical similarities and differences

f. Cultural diversity

2. Students will be encouraged to explore the materials in order to stimulate curiosity and interest

3. The teacher will select materials for use during story time and specific curriculum lessons

Cooperative group learning and project approaches will be the primary

teaching strategies utilized throughout the implementation period. Initially students will be involved in warm-up activities that will help them learn about each other. Then paired partner activities will be introduced. Students will be expected to practice the social skills of using encouraging words, sharing materials and listening to each other. Lessons that would be appropriate for cooperative group work might include: drawing pictures of partner to become aware of physical characteristics; matching multicultural skin tone paper, paint, and crayons to partner's skin; creating animal habitats with a variety of media; "composing" music using keyboard and rhythm instruments.

The human body and animal themes will naturally lend themselves to an extended project approach. The students will determine the direction and form of the projects. The teacher will facilitate by brainstorming, using KWL charts and providing materials and resources.

Evanston Site

As stated in Chapter 1, there are two third grade homeroom classes of 26 and 24 students each. In a team teaching situation the students are ability grouped for reading and math among three teachers, resulting in groups of 16 or 17 students. The 24 targeted students in this research project are from the heterogeneous homeroom class. Therefore, the implementation plan will be incorporated in the social studies and science curricula and homeroom periods.

Homeroom

I. Planning the room

Time Frame: September, 1994 through February, 1995

A. The students and teacher will share responsibility for the management of the classroom

1. Develop a schedule of classroom jobs

a. Secretary

b. Messenger

c. Gardener

d. Lunchbox monitor

e. Custodian

f. Line leaders

B. The students and teacher will begin a display of the diversity within the classroom

1. The teacher will make silhouettes of each student

2. Students will write biographies

3. The bulletin board display will be kept all year and referred to for different lessons

II. A variety of lessons and activities will be presented addressing the following areas:

A. Self-esteem: mini lessons will be presented

B. Diversity: reading literature books on topics of diversity; reading books about different cultures; and reading books by authors of different cultures

C. Ownership and engagement; students will be allowed to plan and organize projects of interest

Social Studies

I. "Columbus" mini unit

Time Frame: October, 1994

A. Teacher will include in discussions the non-Eurocentric view of Columbus' voyages

1. How did the people of Puerto Rico feel about Columbus' intrusion?

2. What were some of the consequences of Columbus' actions?

B. Students will be aware of the diversity of people of different groups

1. Compare and contrast Christopher Columbus and Sally Ride

a. Both were explorers

b. Both followed their dreams

c. Describe the similarities and differences of their circumstances

d. Recognize gender difference

2. Students will work in one of two extended group activities to create class posters presenting the information about Christopher Columbus and Sally Ride

II. "Mapping the Land"

Time Frame: October - November, 1994

A. Students will work in cooperative groups

1. Each group will be responsible for presenting one of four land areas as presented in the social studies book

2. Teacher and students will plan goals for presenting the above information. Suggestions include:

a. Creating a poster

b. Writing a report

3. Teacher will incorporate similarities and differences by sharing examples of land areas of different countries

4. Students will teach their sections to each other

5. Groups will prepare five questions from their presentation to be incorporated into a whole class test (assessment tool)

III. "The First Americans"

Time Frame: November - December, 1994

A. Incorporate similarities and differences of diverse groups

1. Parallel to the study of Native Americans, posters of other groups representative of the students in the classroom will be displayed

2. Display artifacts of various groups

3. Coordinate activities with the art teacher to include various

mediums and styles of different groups of people

B. Provide time for students to share their own culture

1. Students may create formal presentations of their culture

2. Students may share specific artifacts important to them

C. Students will assess their own knowledge of diversity

1. Students will write a reflective journal entry

IV. "Pioneer Economy"

Time Frame: January - February, 1995

A. Teacher will become more learned about diverse groups and their contributions to the development of the United States

B. Incorporate similarities and differences of diverse groups

1. Present the contributions of various groups

2. Compare and contrast life styles of diverse groups to parallel the study of pioneer life

C. Students will work together on creating a "Classatory", a history of how the students came to be a third grade member of the school

Science

I. "Using the Land"

Time Frame October - November, 1994

A. Students will work in partners and small groups on assignments and experiments

B. Students will have opportunities for practicing listening skills and respecting the ideas of others

II. "Nutrition"

Time Frame November - December, 1994

A. Incorporate similarities and differences of diverse groups

1. Students will learn about the different dietary habits of cultures represented in the class

2. Parents will be invited to present cooking and tasting lessons

B. Students will work on an extended group project

1. A bulletin board display will be designed to reflect nutrition facts of different diets

2. Students and teacher will design an instrument for evaluating the nutrition unit

III. "Classifying Living Things"

Time Frame January - February, 1995

A. Incorporate similarities and differences

1. Introduce and classify plants from around the world

2. Have students contribute household plants to develop a class botanic garden

3. Identify international habitats of some of the animals studied

B. Portfolios

1. Students will organize a portfolio of work to include classroom

and homework assignments and other artifacts of the students' choosing

2. Students will assess portfolios

3. Teacher will engage in portfolio conferences with students

Chapter Four

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

Restatement of Project Objectives

The objective of this action research was to improve student engagement in social interactions and academic activities. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten and third grade students in two suburban communities located in northern Illinois. Through teacher observations and student and parent questionnaires it was determined that some students did in fact demonstrate a lack of engagement in social and academic activities. Data also revealed that students' lack of engagement was related to cultural differences, lack of experience in control over their environment, and internalized performance variables including self-efficacy, lack of ownership in the learning process and self-esteem, absence of intrinsic motivation, poorly developed social skills and poor self confidence.

Intervention Summary

Solution strategies suggested by the literature, combined with analysis of

the problem setting, resulted in the implementation of the following two major categories of intervention. A learning environment was created in which students participated in activities to develop an acceptance and appreciation for diversity. A variety of teaching strategies were employed to enhance the students' sense of ownership, self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Historical Description of Intervention
Northbrook Site

Throughout the months of September to February many efforts were made to create a learning environment that encouraged an acceptance and appreciation for diversity. To that end the kindergarten teacher reflected upon her own biases and attitudes regarding diversity and researched appropriate methods of dealing with current curriculum areas which would be presented to students from a variety of perspectives. In addition, many efforts were made to create a physical environment that reflected and affirmed diversity.

Research opened up whole new avenues of understanding the critical nature of exposing students, even at the tender ages of five and six, to the facts that the world they live in, and will eventually compete in, is diverse and in its diversity is exciting, challenging and enriching. It has not been common for primary teachers, so concerned with getting young students off to a "good start" in basic academic skills to think in terms of getting them off to a "good start" in developing rich attitudes toward their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others. In this respect the researcher became committed to

exploring ways to provide her students with a milieu that celebrated and affirmed diversity.

Pictures and posters showing children of different races and cultures were displayed in the classroom. As new materials were collected the children discussed the physical similarities and differences of the children. Dolls representing a variety of cultures and races were acquired and displayed around the globe. The students named the doll collection "The Children of the World". The dolls were played with on a daily basis and often when it was time to clean up children could be heard reminding others to put the dolls back by the "Children of the World Globe". During story time many books were read that featured stories of children from around the world. A collection of favorites was established and frequently these books were chosen to be read over and over again. Each day music from different countries was played as the children entered the room as well as during other times of the day.

An additional collection of books with photographs and drawings of children and adults with varying skin tones was used in a series of activities. Initially paired partners were instructed to choose a book from the collection with the purpose of observing and discussing similarities and differences in physical characteristics: size, hair, eye and skin color. After a short period of time the pairs traded books. In a follow up activity paired partners were given a pack of ten different skin tone papers which they were to match to pictures in their books. Eventually, paired partners were instructed to match the skin tone

papers to their own skin. The students were provided with skin, hair, and eye colored paper, paints and crayons and were encouraged to use these materials to create art projects. The students created a graph illustrating different eye color and charts recording heights and weights. Throughout a project centered upon learning about the human body the emphasis was on similarities and differences among members of the class and people in general.

In an effort to celebrate the cultural heritage of the students a "Family History Questionnaire" was sent home to the parents. (Appendix I) They were asked to share where they were born, where their parents were born and where they currently live. They were asked to share what country their grandparents came from and to indicate their family's cultural/ethnic heritage. In addition, the parents were asked to write a story about a special relative who was important to their family and to explain about special customs or family traditions. Parents were also invited to come to school to share artifacts, music and food from other countries.

The response to both the questionnaire and the invitation was outstanding. One hundred percent of the questionnaires were returned and parents, relatives and friends came to school to talk about Brazil, Africa, Israel, Austria, the Philippine Islands, Poland, Russia, Greece, Cuba and China. Several people brought food typical of the country they were discussing. The Greek and Russian alphabets were illustrated and taught. The children learned songs and games from several countries. They were taught to say greetings and count to ten in a

variety of languages. Articles of clothing and ceremonial costumes were brought for students to see and in some instances try on. Story books in different languages were shared and money and flags from several countries were shown. Often times the presenters discussed their own school experiences in their native lands. The children enjoyed learning that an Austrian coin, called a Groshen, floats! They were privileged to handle objects of art and handmade artifacts from each country represented. Each child made a Polish ornament that represented the world. They danced to ethnic music and saw musical instruments from many regions of the world. In art class each child made an attractive African style necklace out of colorful beads and medallions that they created from clay. The children enjoyed hearing the responses to the "Family History Questionnaires" and putting their individual pictures on pages of a four by two and a half foot World Atlas which indicated the countries from which their families came.

Four books provided additional resource information which the students used to make observations about cultural similarities and differences. Each book explored a different theme. Their titles were Hats, Hats, Hats; Bread, Bread, Bread; This is My Home; and This is the Way We Go to School. Each book depicted its topic through references to different countries around the world. The students became fascinated with locating countries on the globe and in atlases. They also enjoyed finding pictures of flags of countries in picture books and encyclopedias.

Another theme that was explored was the fact that all cultures celebrate a variety of events and that the same events have very different meanings for different peoples. The students were exposed to a non-Eurocentric view of Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. One child poignantly compared the plight of Native Americans losing their homes to the history of Jewish people. The wide variety of Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year celebrations were explored through children's literature, videos, film strips and newspapers.

The Chinese New Year was observed in great style. The children all dressed in red, the Chinese good luck color. They participated in an extremely noisy parade complete with a lion head, banging pans, sticks and musical rhythm instruments. They saw a video about the Chinese New Year celebrations in New York City and heard an audio tape of ancient Chinese music which included music featuring two thousand year old bells. In addition, they enjoyed trying to eat a wide variety of Chinese candies and snacks with chop sticks.

The students' enthusiasm for information about various cultures seemed boundless. Only the constraints of time curtailed the amount of information and experiences that the children seemed ready to absorb.

The second intervention revolved around increasing student engagement by utilizing a variety of teaching strategies through which students' sense of ownership, self-esteem, self-efficacy and sense of belonging was increased. The strategies primarily employed were cooperative group learning, self assessment activities, and project approach learning.

In order to enhance their sense of ownership, students were encouraged to participate in the development of the learning environment. Cooperative groups of paired partners discussed and drew floor plans for the classroom furniture. The arrangement of tables was determined by these drawings. Similar arrangements were grouped together and then one was chosen as the plan for a month. Students also chose pictures and made a variety of displays related to topics being discussed.

Throughout October and November the students were engaged in a project approach to the study of the human body. In order to stimulate interest in the topic the class participated in a paired partner activity during which the partners named all the parts of the body they knew. As awhole class activity a word web for the body was constructed which included over thirty-five external and internal parts of the body. In another activity paired partners were asked to agree upon and draw the internal part of the body which they thought was most important. The drawings were graphed and students discussed their reasons for their choices. While discussing bones, paired partners were asked to identify and draw the smallest and largest bones in the body. These cooperative group activities always included roles, a learning objective, a social skill to be practiced and processing the groups accomplishments.

During the period of time spent on the human body the children often suggested that activities be done with a partner. During one lesson the teacher elected to have the children do a think, pair, share activity and one of the

children was concerned about the fact that there was no social skill being practiced. As a result the group decided that they could practice being good listeners! It was amazing and gratifying to see the enhanced level of engagement which took place during all cooperative group activities.

Children continued to add their products to the project on the human body. One child constructed a heart out of red construction paper, another child crafted one out of clay. Two students worked to draw a five foot tall human skeleton. Several children made brains out of clay and others made their own body books, drawings, and charts. Many children took great pride in bringing books, and photo-copied pages from the encyclopedia and medical books to school!

Although time constraints prevented the development of the project theme on the study of animals several other "projects" were pursued by the students. One of the most exciting was a celebration of a book which one of the students asked the teacher to read, much to her dismay. It happened to be a rather frightening story about slimy creatures from the "deep, dark, damp swamp" that capture a little girl and tie up an old man and woman. The dog belonging to the family was the hero of the story. When the teacher finished reading the story there was a veritable explosion of ideas of how the story could be celebrated. The children rapidly volunteered ideas. They wanted to make a class book, individual books, puppets, a graph of favorite characters, write a song, have a special day dedicated to the book, make classroom decorations, make a mural of

the swamp. And they did!

For three days the students made their creations including a three and a half foot popsicle stick replica of the machine used by the swamp creatures. They made a video which contained segments explaining how they were creating their works in progress and the whole class sang the song composed by four of the students. One of the students wrote a letter on the computer asking the parents to remind the students to wear green on the day of the celebration. Another requested that the teacher make copies of the words of the song so that the children could teach it to the parents. The video and class book were routed to the parents for one night rental. For several weeks individuals and pairs of students continued to create projects related to the story. Creativity, collaboration, cooperation, problem solving and engagement reigned in the kindergarten.

A plethora of trade books, videos, and film strips were used to stimulate discussions and activities that centered around issues of belonging and self-esteem. The materials were divided into three theme classifications: the importance of self acceptance; growth and change; dealing with feelings. The children reflected upon the topics through think, pair, share activities, cooperative group work, artistic representations, role playing, book celebrations, dramatizations and self assessment instruments. The students worked on expressing appreciation for others, recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, including others, accepting partners graciously, contributing

to group efforts, expressing their own feelings and respecting the feelings of others. Initially, it appeared too difficult for the children to identify their strengths, weaknesses and feelings. One of the strategies used that seemed to help was to have the whole group give affirmations to one individual at a time. Sometimes this was done verbally and at other times children drew pictures to express themselves.

The children became quite adept at generously accepting partners and including individuals into group play. They also were able to give messages of encouragement and support. During one session the instructor made a mistake and commented upon it in front of the class. One child very sympathetically said, "Well teacher, at least you tried."

Self assessment was used as another strategy to develop self-esteem and ownership. The students used Likert Scale instruments to assess a variety of products and performances. They ranked their work on individually created books, progress in learning letter names, progress in printing skills, performance in cooperative groups, and ability to include class members in activities. The children were remarkably reflective and eager to explain why they ranked themselves in a given area. They were able to express pride in their excellent work and indicate how they would improve next time. The combination of celebrating diversity and using the strategies of the project approach, cooperative learning, and self assessment to increase self-esteem, ownership and a sense of belonging appeared to increase student engagement in social and

academic activities. A thorough analysis of the data was required in order to determine whether engagement had improved.

Evanston Site

During the September through February period, the two areas of intervention were implemented in the social studies and science curricula and homeroom setting. An environment conducive to developing an appreciation and respect for cultural differences was created. This approach involved the teacher examining her own attitudes and biases about diversity, developing a physical setting that affirmed diversity and infusing multi cultural perspectives in the curriculum. Next, a variety of strategies were implemented to help students develop a sense of ownership with their learning and enhance their self-efficacy. Students were involved in decisions about the physical arrangement of the classroom and various aspects of academic lessons. Their participation resulted in the development of a responsible attitude and application of higher order thinking skills.

The concepts of ownership, diversity, and self-esteem were established the first week of school. First, a management program for taking care of "our" classroom was established by the students and the teacher. Seven "jobs", for example, secretary, messenger and gardener, were created and a two week rotation schedule established where students volunteered to carry out the job of their choice. It was exciting to watch the students exhibit a sense of ownership with comments like, "It's not my favorite job, but I don't mind being

custodian," and "It's nice to have these plants in the classroom. It looks nice." As time passed, it took more time to reassign positions. With eighty percent of the students volunteering for each job, time was allotted for students to campaign or negotiate before jobs were assigned.

Next, the concept of diversity was introduced with silhouettes created by the teacher. Reactions by the students were exciting and heartwarming. Immediately, they displayed a sense of pride and joy about their own silhouettes and then began recognizing features of others as the teacher completed each silhouette. From a spontaneous discussion that followed, the teacher observed the students playing a "Guess Who" game. For those who could not identify someone from their silhouette, students would give positive clues ("He is tall...always smiling." "She is friendly...wears pretty hair ribbons.").

Throughout the units of study, the teacher made a conscious effort to regularly reflect on the content of the curriculum and the methods used to present it. She exposed the students to a variety of perspectives other than the traditional Eurocentric points of view, modeled an appreciation for the diversity of the students in the class and regularly used materials that reflected positive attitudes. Through careful planning by the teacher the students engaged in meaningful and authentic ways.

The social studies curriculum provided some of these natural opportunities. The mini unit on "Columbus" was presented with the focus on decision making and consequences of decisions. Applying higher order thinking

questions, the teacher guided the students in recognizing the feelings of the groups of people Columbus encountered on his many voyages. During discussions students demonstrated an understanding that there are two sides to a story. A comparison was also made between Columbus and Sally Ride, the astronaut: both were explorers who followed their dreams. This comparison highlighted the fact that people from diverse backgrounds can and do make meaningful contributions and in many respects have the same goals. The circumstances for achieving those goals is the difference.

The unit, "The First Americans" lent itself readily to the concept of diversity. Along with the study of the Kwakiutl Indians, the students compared their own ethnic heritages. They identified their families' origins, researched with their parents when their families first immigrated to America and reflected on their own traditions and celebrations. Posters of other American Indians were displayed to show that diversity exists within a group of people. A classroom bookshelf was created with literature books from the school library. Books such as Pepe the Lamp Lighter and Grandfather's Journey were read to the class. These and other stories provided students with examples of group diversity.

A poster of international flags caught the students' curiosity. Many times groups of students were gathered around identifying and comparing the diverse symbols. A spontaneous incident happened during this unit. One of the students brought in a birthday treat to share with his classmates. One of the boys

responded with, "Gracias." A classmate asked, "What did you say?", to which the boy responded, "That's 'thank you' in Spanish." The teacher continued with, "A ri ga to" (Japanese). Other students began calling out "thank you" in other languages. This one minute burst of energy resulted in the children discussing languages: "...some are easy to learn,...my mom speaks German,...I'm taking French...My grandma's from Sweden, but I don't know how to say 'thank you' in Swedish. I'll go home and ask my mom!"

During the "Pioneer Economy" unit, a time line was started to record facts and information about the lives and decisions of pioneers. To continue the concept of diversity, the time line included facts from the students and their families. With dates inclusive between "1650-1995" (1650 being the earliest date of one student's family immigrating to America), the students contributed information whenever they discovered it.

In February, a Chinese student, new to the school, was asked if he would like to share facts and ideas about Chinese New Year. His presentation consisted of a short description of the event, a question and answer session, and the sharing of Chinese New Year candy. What was interesting about the question and answer session was the personal tone reflected in the students' thoughts and ideas. Personal questions were asked appropriately and a real sharing took place. It reminded the teacher of an aspect of the project approach which encourages students to interact with people and objects in ways that have meaning for them and where ideas come from their familiar world.

Though more of a challenge, diversity was presented in some of the science lessons. After studying "Nutrition" in science, a food taste was planned as a culminating activity for two classes. Parents were asked to prepare an original ethnic dish for this international, "Taste of Diversity." The response was tremendous with families contributing over thirty main dishes and desserts for the students to enjoy. Everyone was encouraged to taste everything and then received a serving amount of their "favorites." Reflections by the students shared during discussions and in their entry journals indicated a positive appreciation for the variety of tastes and flavors. Not only were they able to articulate which were their favorite foods and why, they also deduced that many of the foods were similar, yet different. For example, some students realized, "I had chicken three times but they all tasted different!" A few students were able to name the four rice dishes they had tasted and the countries of their origin.

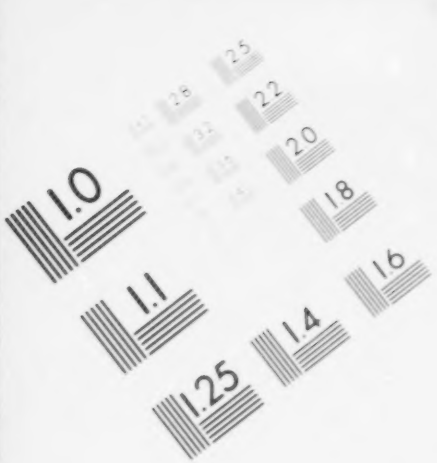
Two trade books from the science unit, "Classifying Living Things," contributed a great deal of information about animals and plants in different parts of the world. Not only did the students learn scientific facts but they also applied map skills in locating these areas on the world map. These discoveries resulted in higher order thinking questions of how these species survive in different environments and about the people who live in these regions.

In order to enhance their self-esteem and develop a sense of ownership

with their learning, students were provided opportunities to participate in some of the decisions about the classroom environment and the goals and outcomes of some of the lessons. Strategies included the application of the extended projects approach and the use of cooperative learning groups, portfolios, student self assessments, and reflection journals.

Students helped make decisions about the layout of their desks and the design of bulletin board displays which included some of their work. The teacher and students planned and utilized three seating arrangements; rows, groups of four and rows and groups. During these planning sessions the students and teacher shared their needs and ideas for various groupings and joint decisions were made. Specifically, students made recommendations for bulletin board materials including titles, decorations, and organization of pieces for the "First Americans" and "Nutrition" units. Again, it was important to create natural situations where the students' input would be meaningful.

Aspects of the project approach were incorporated into specific units. After the mini unit on "Columbus" was completed, another explorer, Sally Ride, was introduced through a short KWL discussion. The students were then given the choice of working on a visual and oral presentation for "Columbus" or "Sally Ride." Within each group, students researched and planned what information would be presented, what would be on the poster (words, artwork, etc.), and worked together on the project over a period of one week. At one point a few of the students from each group shared how their project was progressing. As a



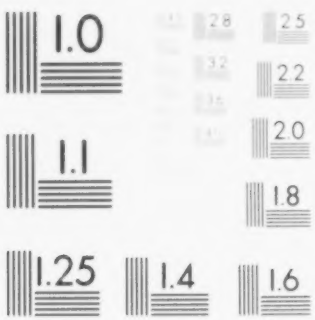
AIIM

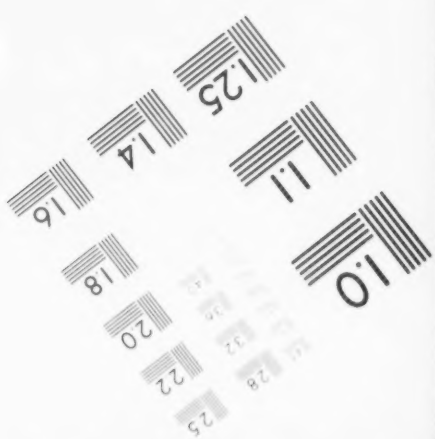
Association for Information and Image Management

1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301/587-8202

Centimeter

Inches





MANUFACTURED TO AII STANDARDS
BY APPLIED IMAGE, INC.

result, the students' work included a comparative display of facts about both explorers.

Together, the students and teacher planned the time line for the "Pioneer Economy", deciding on the dates and increments of time. As the weeks, passed, students and teacher contributed pictures and index cards of information to the time line. One student contributed information about calculators that she had learned in math. For the "Nutrition" unit, students wrote and displayed short "menus" describing familiar foods. The teacher used these menus to help the students reflect on the concepts taught in class.

Cooperative group strategies were incorporated into the "Mapping the Land" unit. Instead of having the whole class study the four land formations in the social studies text, cooperative groups were established with each group assigned one of the formations. Groups and jobs (materials manager, recorder, artists and encourager) were randomly assigned using index cards with stickers and words for identification. Over a two week period students read the assigned material from the text, researched other interesting facts, and planned and created a visual and oral presentation. Social skills of listening, sharing of materials, and respect for others' ideas were targeted. Then, each group was given time to "teach" their information to the other groups.

Portfolios were used for the "Classifying Living Things" unit. Students had full responsibility for their folders and all assignments including, a KWL sheet, journal writing, creative writing, illustrations, graphic organizers and

art work. It was interesting to watch the students refer to and share their work with other classmates at their table. The self assessment tool consisted of eight sentence stems developed by the teacher. Responses elicited the students' thoughts on the content of the unit, their likes and dislikes about assignments and working in groups, their reflections on what they had learned, what they were proud of and their perceptions of areas they would like to improve upon.

Students had more opportunities to take ownership for their learning by utilizing journal writing during the "Nutrition" unit and by creating assessment questions for the "Mapping the Land" unit. Each student kept a running log of the foods they ate for a one week period. These entries were used to help the students reflect on their eating habits, affirming those habits that were positive and those that needed improvement. After "teaching" about their land formation in "Mapping the Land, " each group was excited about making up five questions to be included in the unit test. Students had varying responses about their results: "I did well on my own questions,"... "That group made up some hard questions,"... "We did a good job teaching."

Overall the intervention plan was successfully implemented with only a few deviations from the project outcomes. Time and the unavailability of artifacts were the two variables that effected implementation. Specific mini lessons were not incorporated because the teacher applied the extended projects approach. Completing the district's core curriculum and incorporating

all intervention strategies, proved to be a huge undertaking.

Presentation and Analysis of Data
Northbrook Site

In order to measure the effect of the interventions on factors related to engagement, the fall questionnaire was revised and administered again to the Kindergarten students. (Appendix E) In this version, 15 of the original 29 questions were used. The questions were selected because of the negative results recorded in the fall. Since general attitude toward school was extremely positive and since students demonstrated continued positive attitudes throughout the year, this area was not assessed. The questions selected for the spring questionnaire address the remaining four areas of concern: sense of belonging; satisfaction with self; self-efficacy; and friendship.

The questionnaire was again administered orally by the classroom teacher. Individual children were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to the questions. In a departure from the procedure used earlier, the teacher often asked the children to explain why they responded in a particular way. Generally, the responses given were simple and reflected the concerns and outlook of typical five and six year old children. For example, when asked why he responded "yes" to the question, "Are you often sad?" a little boy responded that he was sad because one of his friends had moved away. When asked why he wished he were

different he said, "I wish I was a tiger!" The same child indicated that he only felt as smart as the other children when he was at his own house. In addition, he stated that getting into a group was hard because he didn't always get to be with his friends. He added that, "I really want to be with my friends." Another student responded that he felt left out because he couldn't go to London with his parents and that he wasn't as smart as the other students because "I don't know 50+50." Several students wanted to be different by being as old as their older siblings. Some students who indicated difficulty with friendships clarified that the real issue was related to the inability to be with one specific person. Even though they were reminded to respond to the questions as they related to their school experiences most of the children appeared to find it difficult to think in those terms.

It is interesting to note that although the students' explanations of why they answered in a positive or negative way to a specific question were naive and encompassed a narrow context, there was a strong correspondence between the total scores of individuals and the teacher's concerns based on observation.

The teacher's concerns regarding specific children appeared to be confirmed by their overall negative responses, regardless of the reasons for the responses. This information appeared to give additional weight to the data addressed by the questionnaire.

In the analysis of the data which follows, all the question numbers used in the graphs and discussions are from the spring questionnaire and are correlated

with the corresponding questions from the fall.

Chart 1

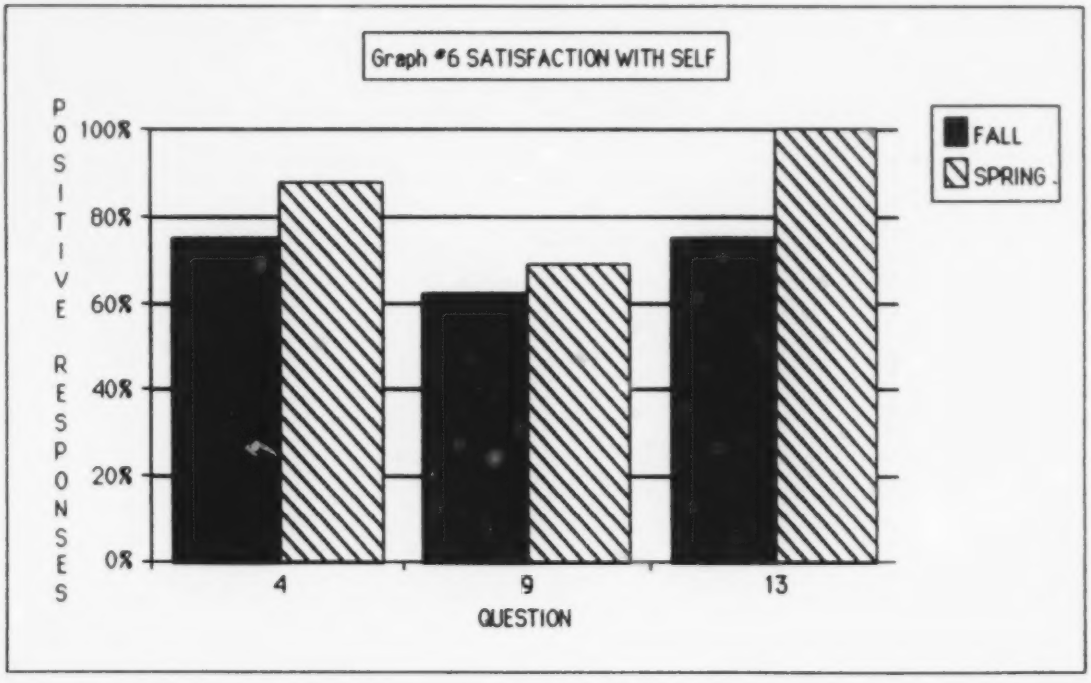
Ranked percentages of Positive Responses
To Kindergarten Questionnaires
Fall 1994 - Spring 1995

Fall		Spring
100		100
81		100
75		100
75		100
75		100
75	-	94
75		94
69	Median	88
63		88
63		81
62		69
62		69
62		63
50		62
44		56

In Chart 1,the questionnaire results from fall and spring are ranked in descending order by the percentage of positive responses. The increase in positive responses in the spring is immediately evident. In the fall the range of

positive responses was from 44 percent to 100 percent.with the median at 69 percent. In the spring, the range was from 56 percent to 100 percent positive responses. The dramatic difference is in the distribution of results between those extremes. The median in the spring is at 88 percent positive responses, 19 percent higher than the fall median. In the spring five questions elicited 100 percent positive responses as compared to one question in the fall.

Graphs #6-#9 illustrate the percentages of positive responses to the questionnaires administered in the spring and fall.

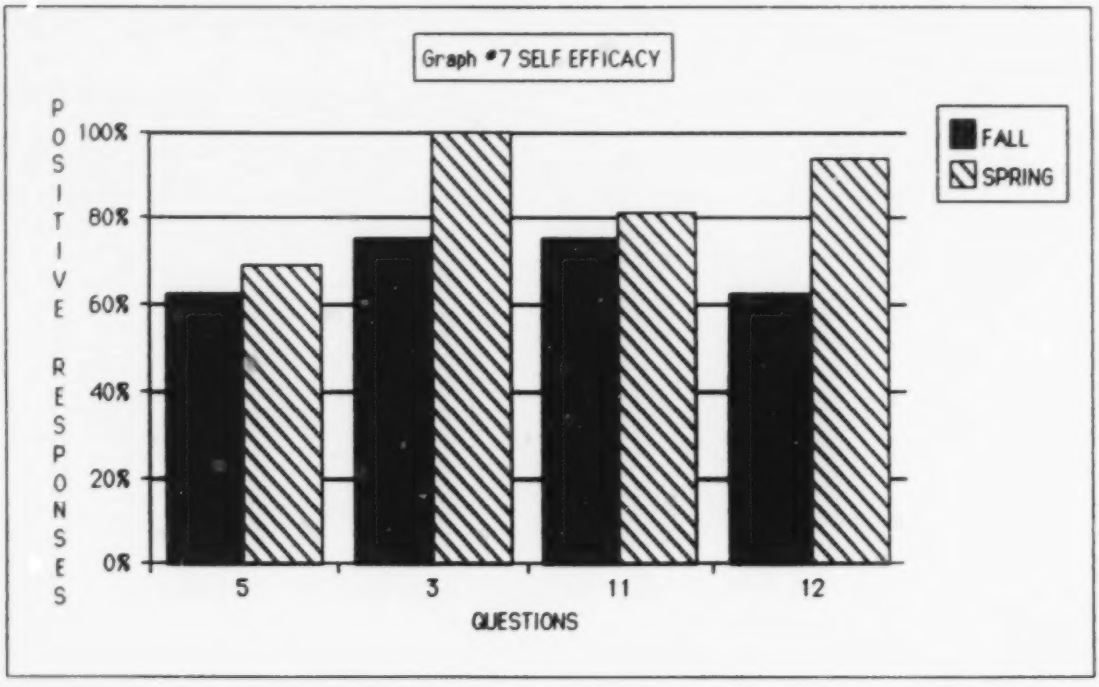


In Graph #6 SATISFACTION WITH SELF the responses to the questions reveal that the students view themselves more positively in the spring than they did in the fall. In question #9 related to wishing to be different, 69 percent of the children were satisfied with the way they are as opposed to 62

percent satisfaction in the fall. It is to be noted that several students added that by being different they meant they wanted to be older. One little girl made the same comment in the fall and spring: "I wish I was ten years old like my sister." She indicated that that sister caused her significant distress. In the spring, 100 percent of the responses to question#13 were positive, indicating that the students did not feel that they were "picked on" by others. Fall results were 75 percent positive. In the fall 25 percent of the children indicated that they were often sad (question #4) and in the spring 12 percent responded that they were often sad. Satisfaction with self and self-esteem go hand in hand and as such appear to have improved during the period of intervention.

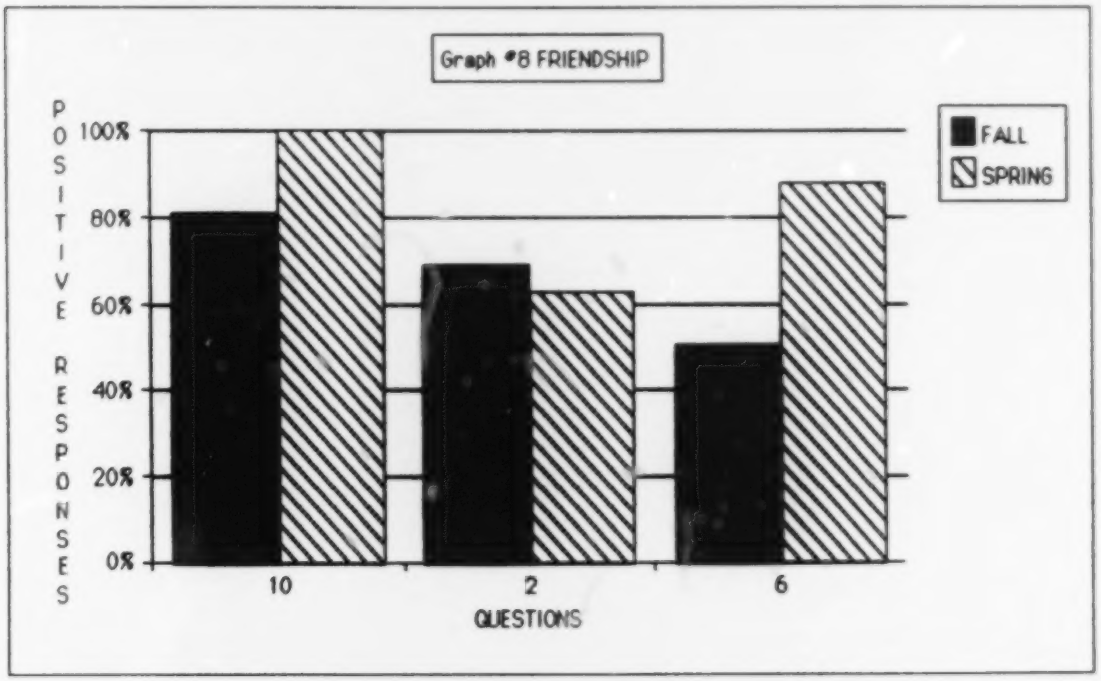
Graph #7 SELF EFFICACY indicates that there has been considerable improvement in feelings of competence and confidence. This is gratifying because there is a critical relationship between self-efficacy and levels of engagement. The 100 percent positive response to question #3 indicates that there has been a 25 percent increase in positive attitude toward trying new things. An interest in trying new things has an important impact upon engagement. In addition, 94 percent responded in a positive manner by indicating that it was not their fault when things went wrong. This is a 31 percent improvement over the fall responses. In the spring 81 percent of the children reported that they were as smart as the other children (question # 11) in comparison to a 75 percent positive response in the fall. In the fall 62 percent of the children indicated that they did not get worried in school and in

the spring 69 percent indicated the same. When asked why he did get worried sometimes in school, one child responded that he got worried when the class gerbil died. Other children were not able to be specific. Since there was little improvement in this area (question #5), it would be advantageous to address feelings of worry through literature and discussions in the future.



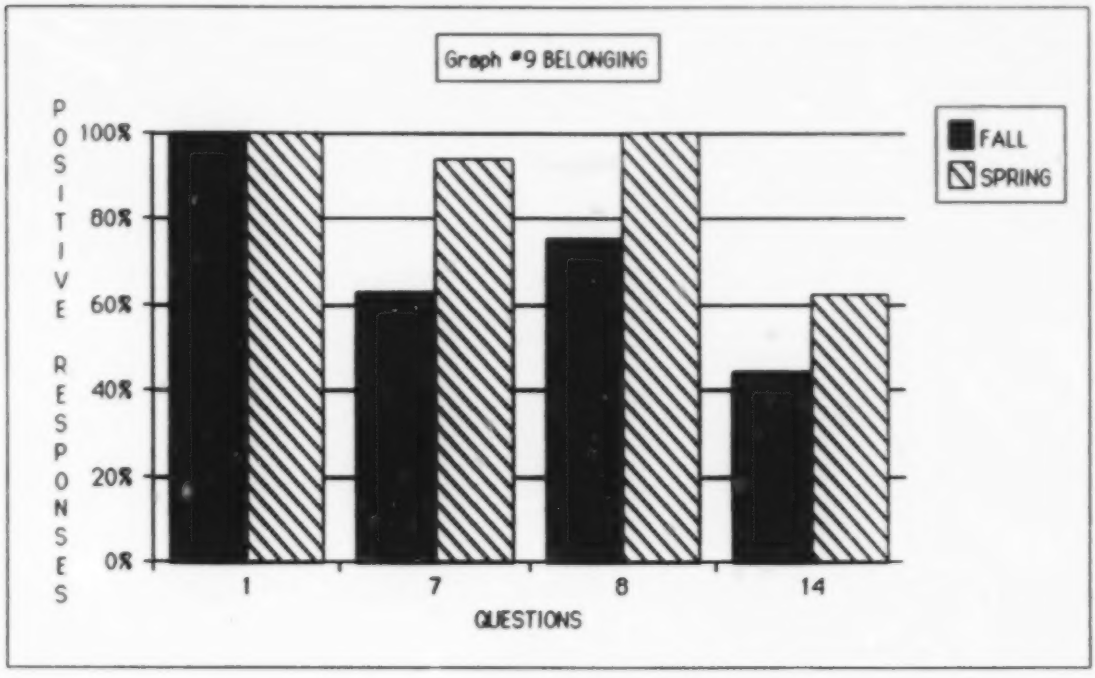
It is encouraging to note in Graph #8 FRIENDSHIP, that 100 percent of the students reported they had a lot of friends. But it is also interesting to note that an additional 6 percent of the students reported difficulty making friends in the spring. In the fall 69 percent of the students responded that it was not difficult to make friends while in the spring 63 percent of the children responded that making friends was not difficult. At this age children are still

in the process of being more socialized and are continuing to acquire the skills necessary to make friends. Although many activities, books and discussions revolved around issues of friendship it has come to the teacher's attention that addressing feelings of difficulty in making friends is another key issue on which to focus.



The dramatic improvement in sense of belonging is indicated in Graph #9 BELONGING by the increased percentage of positive responses to questions #7 and #8. Ninety-four percent of the children report that they do not feel left out and 100 percent report that they like working in groups. This is in contrast to the fall responses which indicated that 63 percent did not feel left out and

75 percent liked working in groups. There is an 18 percent increase in positive responses to question #14. Sixty-two percent of the students responded that it was not difficult to get into groups. When asked why it was difficult to get into groups, some children responded that they did not get to be with their friends. This response is typical for young children.



The behavioral checklist (Appendix J) used in the fall was chosen again as a tool to record observations of student behavior related to engagement. Behaviors such as proximity to others, contributing to discussions, enthusiasm for and absorption in activities were observed and recorded. In contrast to the 31 percent of students who demonstrated lack of engagement in the Fall only 12 percent of the students appeared to demonstrate behaviors indicative of

lack of engagement. Teacher observation confirmed a significant improvement in contributions to discussions, relating to others and active participation in activities. In the fall there were four students in particular who continually appeared isolated either physically or affectively from social and academic activities. In the spring these four students appeared to be more relaxed, positive and actively engaged in all activities. The incidences of lack of engagement recorded through the behavioral checklists were primarily related to lack of participation in discussions. Two of the four students had improved in this regard while the other two continued to be reticent.

Evanston Site

To assess the effect of the interventions on issues related to engagement, the student questionnaire and behavioral checklists were used again. The student questionnaire was revised to include twenty of the thirty five items from the original questionnaire administered in the fall. (Appendix F) These twenty items represented the most significant negative responses by the students. The behavioral checklists (Appendix J) were used to record the teacher's observations during various activities and learning situations. Engagement behaviors targeted were students' proximity to others, level of participation in activities, listening and contributing to discussions, and the frequency of exhibiting curiosity, independence and intrinsic motivation.

In the analysis of the data which follows, all the question numbers used in graphs and discussions are from the spring questionnaire and are correlated

with the corresponding questions from the fall.

Chart 2

Ranked percentages of Positive Responses
to Third Grade Questionnaires
Fall 1994 - Spring 1995

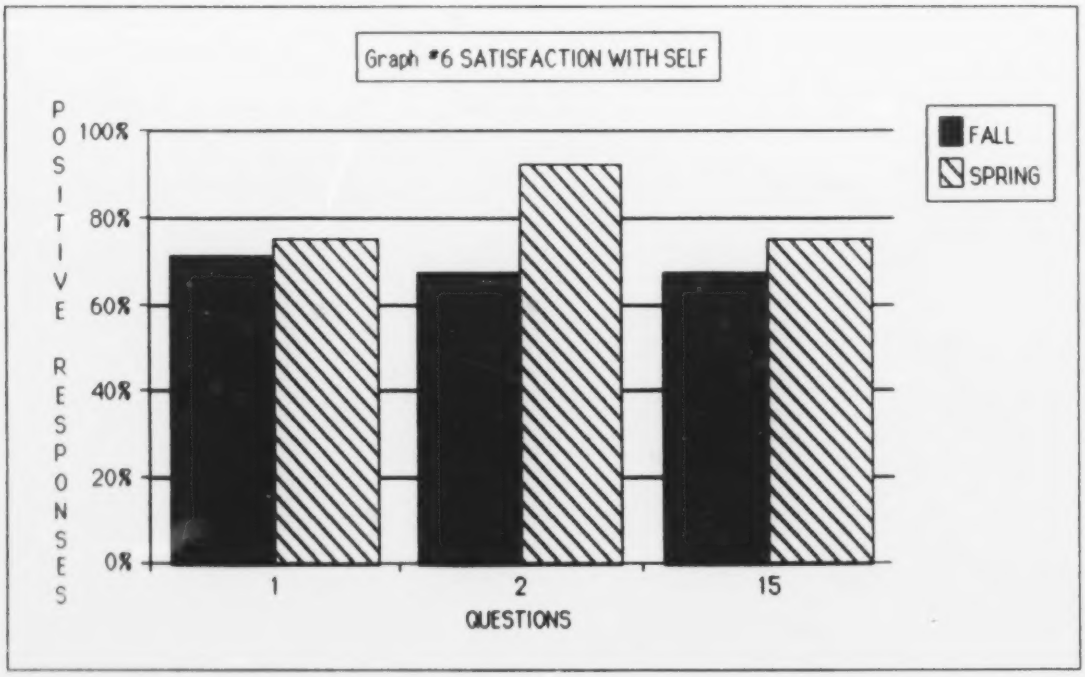
Fall		Spring
75		92
75		88
75		83
75		83
71		83
71		75
67		75
67		75
62		75
62	Median	75
62		75
62		71
58		67
58		67
54		67
54		67
50		63
50		54
37		50
37		46

In Chart 2, the questionnaire results from fall and spring are ranked in

descending order by the percentage of positive responses. The increase in positive responses in the spring is immediately evident. In the fall the range of positive responses was from 37 percent to 75 percent with the median at 62 percent. In the spring the range was from 46 percent to 92 percent positive responses. The dramatic difference is in the distribution of results between those extremes. The median in the spring is at 75 percent positive responses, 13 percent higher than the fall median. In the spring eleven questions elicited positive responses of 75 percent or higher while in the fall there were only four questions with 75 percent positive responses.

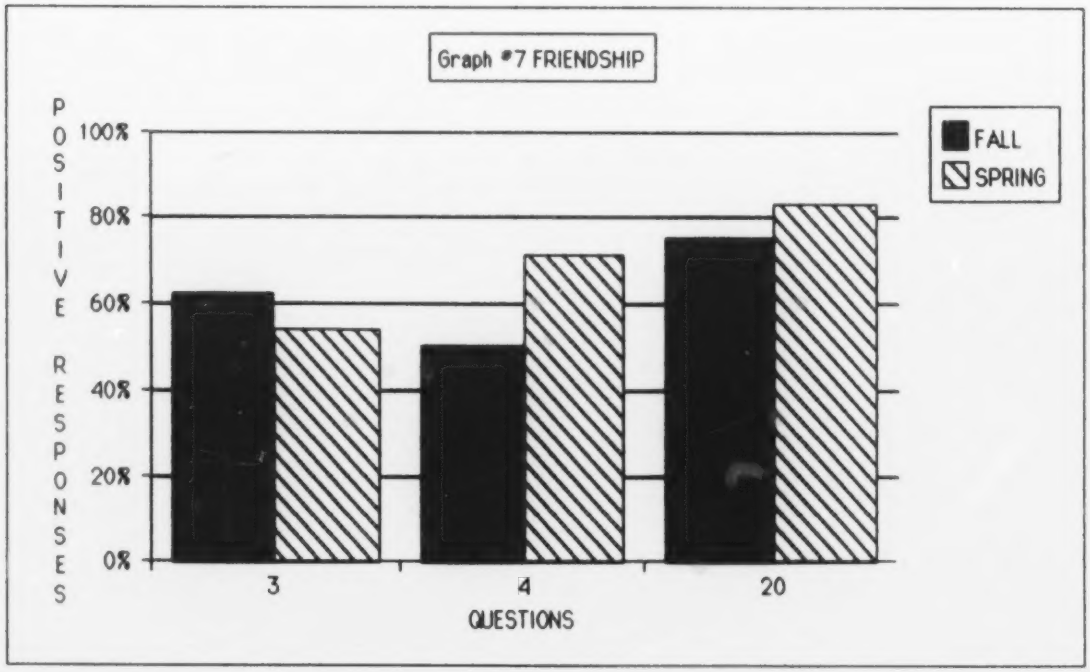
Graphs #6-#10 compare the data from the fall and spring questionnaires. Items are grouped by category and percentages of positive responses are shown.

Graph #6 SATISFACTION WITH SELF reveals an overall 13 percent increase in the students' positive feelings about themselves. In the fall, 71 percent of the students felt they were good at a lot of things (item #1) and 67 percent felt they were easy to get along with. Spring responses were 75 percent positive in both areas. A noticeable increase can be seen in the students' responses to their sense of feeling sad. Fall results reflect 67 percent of the students indicating a sense of not being sad while 92 percent of the students felt this way (item #2) in the spring.

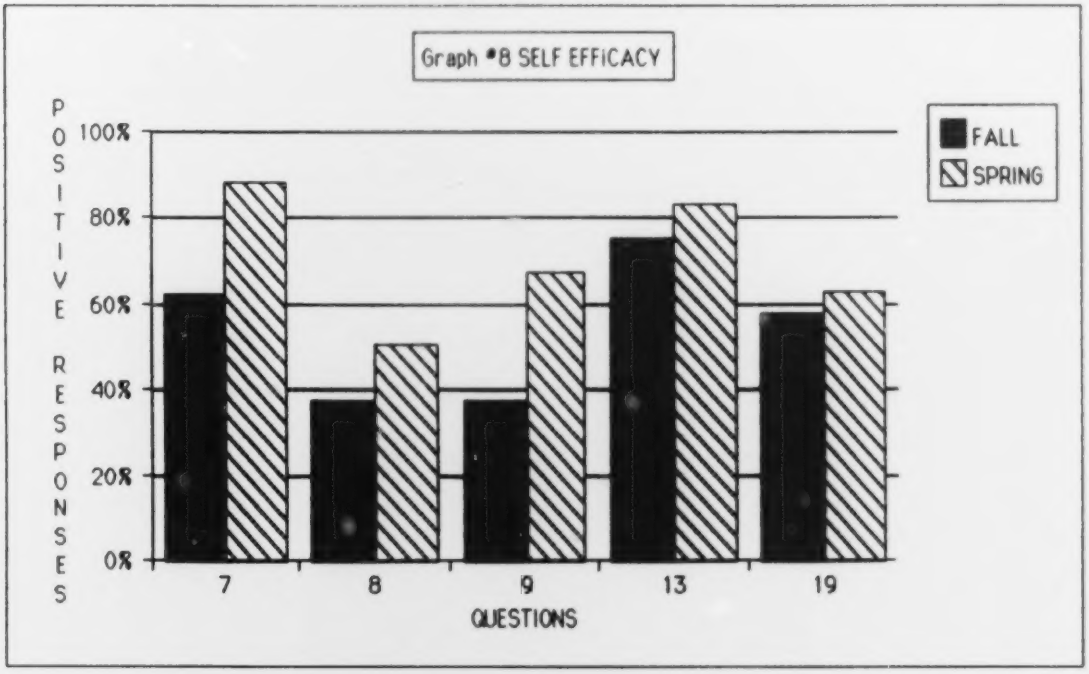


It was exciting to see the students' responses indicating that they felt better about themselves in the spring than they had in the fall. These positive feelings had an impact on their ability to relate to others and participate effectively in class activities.

Graph #7 FRIENDSHIP shows that 71 percent of the students responded positively to making friends (item #4) compared to only 50 percent in the fall. The students' positive perceptions of having many friends (item #20) increased from 75 percent to 83 percent. Students were not as positive in the area of feeling that their classmates think they have good ideas (item #3). Fall results were 62 percent positive and 54 percent positive in the spring.

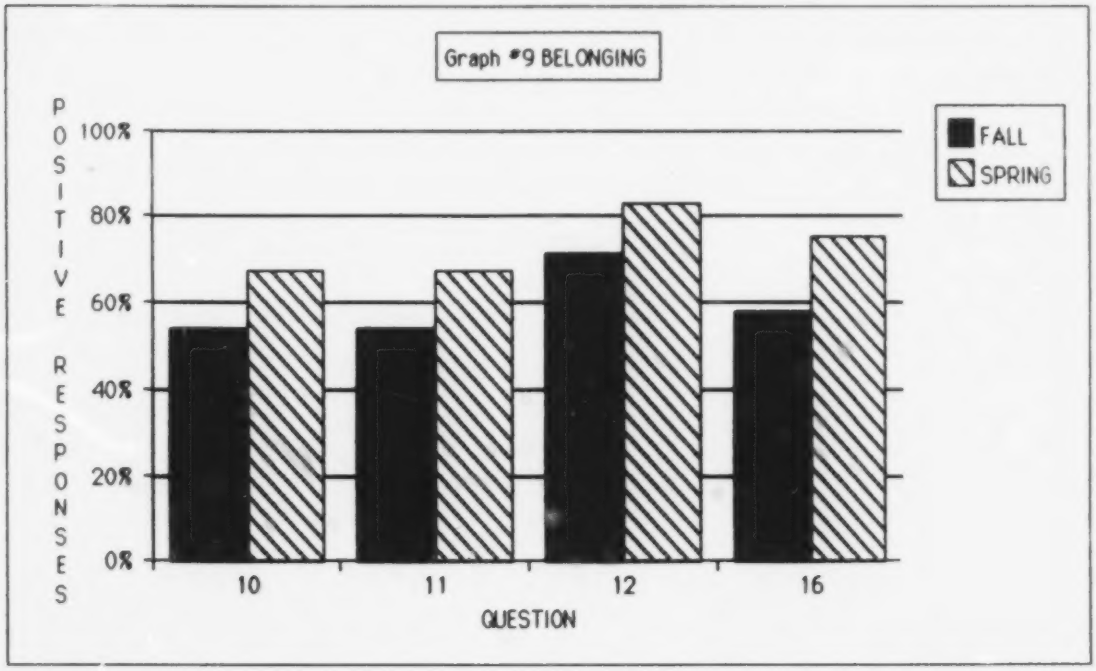


These results are perplexing. However, the fact that 54 percent of the children question whether their friends think they have good ideas, does not necessarily reflect their actual comfort level in relating to others. Other issues of projection and self-esteem could be contributing factors.



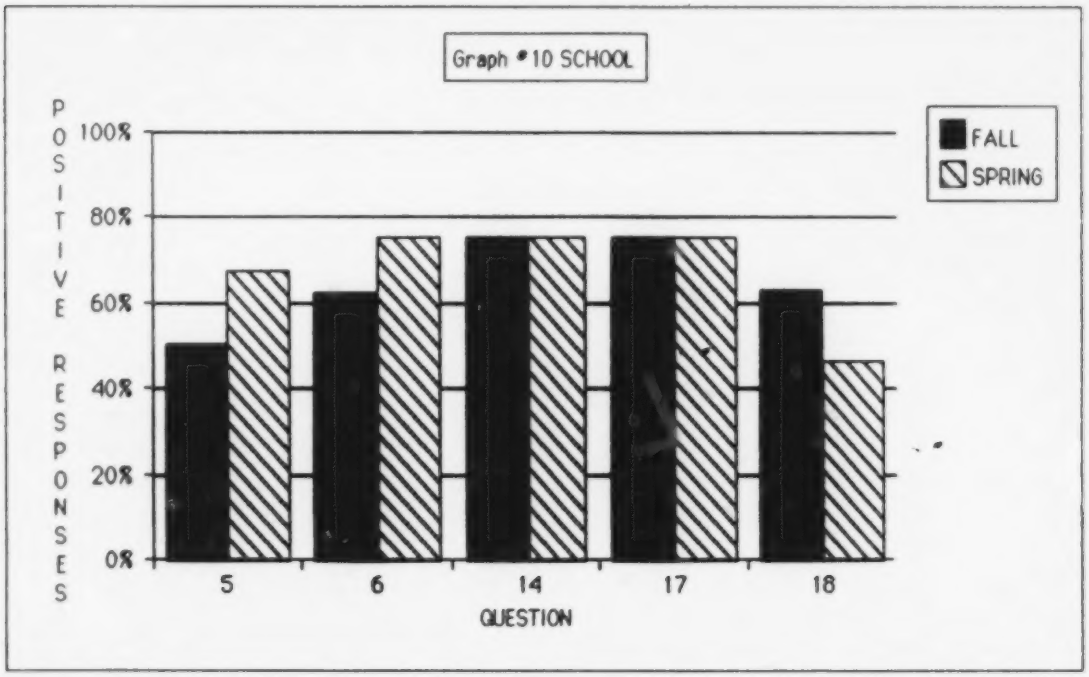
Graph #8 SELF EFFICACY shows considerable improvement. Positive responses increased from 54 percent to 70 percent overall. The most improvement is in the area of trying new things (item #9). In the fall, 37 percent of the students felt comfortable in trying new things, while 67 percent would try new things in the spring. Similarly, students revealed an improved attitude of not giving up when things go wrong (item #7). In the fall, 62 percent of the students had a positive approach, while in the spring, 88 percent indicated that they would not give up. Responses about feeling comfortable speaking in front of the class (item #8) improved from 37 percent in the fall to 50 percent in the spring. In response to schoolwork being interesting (item # 13), fall results were 75 percent positive and 83 percent positive in the spring.

In the fall, 58 percent of the students felt that they were as smart as other students in the class (item #19). In the spring, 63 percent responded positively. These positive results indicate an improved risk taking attitude. This is a key component necessary for successful engagement.



Graph #9 BELONGING indicates a positive sense of belonging in four areas. In the fall, 58 percent of the students felt that it was easy to get into a group (item 16). In the spring, 75 percent found it easy to get into a group. In the fall, 54 percent of the students enjoyed working in groups (item #11) and did not feel left out (item #10). In the spring, results reflect 67 percent positive perceptions in both of these areas. Playing with others (item #12) also increased from 71 percent positive responses in the fall to 83 percent positive

in the spring. These responses are encouraging because it indicates that the students are genuinely enthusiastic about their participation and sense of belonging.



Graph #10 SCHOOL shows interesting responses to the questions related to attitudes toward school. In the fall and spring, 75 percent of the students felt that there was time to learn things in which they were interested (item #14) and that new ideas emerged from different activities and lessons (item #17). In response to not having enough time to share their ideas (item #18) the number of positive responses dropped from 63 percent in the fall to 46 percent in the spring. Noticeable increases were found in two other areas. In the

spring 67 percent of the students felt comfortable raising their hands in class (item #5) compared to 50 percent in the fall. Feeling important in school (item #6), was 75 percent positive in the spring compared to 62 percent in the fall. It was encouraging to see that the students' attitudes toward school remained positive throughout the implementation period.

The behavioral checklist was used to record student behaviors during ten academic and social situations. Most tallies were made from direct observations. However, some lessons required teacher involvement and in these cases the teacher reflected on the behaviors at the conclusion of the lesson.

Exhibiting enthusiasm, participating in discussions and attention to tasks improved, or were consistent with positive results in the fall. It is exciting to note, that the frequency with which some students demonstrated independent and intrinsic motivation behaviors was higher in the spring than in the fall. Of the ten targeted students, three made significant gains. Specifically, Student C demonstrated more enthusiasm and participated more in discussions and on projects even though English is not his first language. Student D was in more physical proximity to the others in the group and was more responsible about contributing towards the completion of projects. Student J's social skills improved tremendously when working in cooperative groups. In the fall he stated, "I don't want to work with anybody." From observations this spring he was seen working and sharing cooperatively with others on a regular basis. The other eight students engaged more positively in the spring than in the fall, with

steady improvement in social skills and levels of participation.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Based on the knowledge and understanding gleaned from the research, the teachers developed an action plan. The objective of the project was to improve student engagement in social and academic activities. Two major categories of intervention were implemented. A learning environment was created in which the students accepted and developed an appreciation for diversity.

A variety of teaching strategies were used through which students' sense of ownership, self-efficacy, sense of belonging and self-esteem were enhanced. As a result of these interventions the students in the kindergarten and third grade classes increased their levels of engagement as measured by teacher observation, student questionnaire, student productivity on assignments and student self assessment. Implementation of the plan did, in fact, increase the students' levels of engagement as expected.

Data reflected an overall percentage of positive responses in both kindergarten and third grade. Results of teacher observations confirmed a significant improvement of students' participation in discussions and activities.

In reviewing the instruments, the teachers found that although there was certainly room for subjectivity, there was a remarkable correlation between teachers' concerns regarding targeted individuals and the actual results of the questionnaires and behavioral checklists. Because of the important information

gathered through these instruments, both teachers have elected to use them in the future.

One area of difficulty which arose while tallying the data from the questionnaires is worthy of comment. The questions were phrased in equal amounts of positive and negative statements. For this reason a child responding "no" to the statement "I am often sad." is actually giving a positive response. Although this made tabulation of responses and reporting complicated it was felt that balancing negative and positive statements was critical to accumulating meaningful data.

The researchers believe that in the future it would be advantageous to limit the amount of personal variables addressed which affect engagement. It was extremely interesting and rewarding to develop materials and activities addressing sense of belonging, self-efficacy, satisfaction with self, friendship and an appreciation for diversity. However, it is clear to the researchers that the extent of the number of topics made it difficult to address these key issues in sufficient depth. For example, there was a great amount of time spent exploring the importance of making friends, ways to make new friends, and strategies to solve conflicts. Dealing with the *feelings* related to difficulty making friends was not addressed. After reviewing the data, nuances of responses to other statements in the questionnaire were found.

Perhaps the most significant departure from previous practice in both the kindergarten and third grade classes was an increased emphasis on teaching

strategies that allow for student development of ownership in the learning process. Each of the strategies which were implemented as described in the intervention plan had profound effects on engagement. These factors are belonging, satisfaction with self, the development of friendship, and self-efficacy.

Providing extended time for engaging students in social and academic situations was a challenging task. Both researchers at the kindergarten and third grade levels discovered the importance of adapting schedules and curriculum to ensure the students' engagement. Finding ways to extend time within the organizational structure of the school day and week was possible when the rigidity of having designated time slots was abandoned. For example, science was taught for one week instead of the piecemeal approach of dividing the time between science and social studies lessons. Giving up content of some units to extend the in-depth study of another, resulted in more meaningful integrated learning.

During the implementation period, the researchers recognized the importance of spending time with students in assessment situations. Insights gained from individual conferences, "This was very good but next time I would make my trees and boat bigger," and portfolio assessments, "Working in a group was hard because it was hard not to be bossy," were invaluable in helping the researchers stay attuned to their goals. It will be important to find additional ways to incorporate more time for conferences and informal conversations with

students.

The childrens' approach to self assessment was a revelation to the teachers. The student demonstrated an amazing willingness to reflect on their progress. In addition, they were considerably accurate and insightful about their strengths and weaknesses.

Because of the students' enthusiasm for projects and cooperative learning activities, the teachers encouraged the students to spontaneously suggest and develop many of their own activities. The most important by-product of student initiated work was extraordinary engagement in problem solving of the social and academic components of their endeavors.

To facilitate the incorporation of diversity into existing curricula it may be helpful for teachers to use the many services, workshops and materials available through the Illinois Resource Center. Their personnel can provide guidance into the many ways to incorporate the study of similarities and differences into existing units of study.

Addressing the issue of student engagement was a fascinating and enriching experience. Research provided a variety of relevant topics for further exploration. Two of these topics, "The Role of Rewards" and "Learning Styles" could prove equally challenging. Developing a broad based knowledge of engagement will enable teachers to help all students engage to their fullest potential.

Neither researcher could have anticipated the powerful impact of the

intervention plan. The development of sense of belonging, ownership, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with self increased the levels of engagement dramatically. This project has confirmed a commitment to making time for extended, in-depth projects, cooperative group work and self assessment which allow for the evolution of positive dispositions toward problem solving, collaboration, and cooperative learning.

References Cited

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. Educational Psychologist,20,117-148.

Banks, J.A. (1993). Multicultural education: Development, dimensions, and challenges. Phi Delta Kappan, Sept. 93, 22-28.

Banks, J.A., & McGee Banks, C.A. (1993). Multicultural education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Baratz-Snowden, J. (1988). The educational progress of language minority children: Finding from the NAEP 1985-86 special study. (National Assessment of Educational Progress FL 017703). Princeton, NJ.

Barclay, K.H., & Breheny,C. (1994). Letting the children take over more of their own learning: Collaborative research in the kindergarten classroom. Young Children. The Journal of the national Association for the Education of Young Children, 49, 33-39.

Bellanca, J., & Fogarty, R. (1991). Blueprints for thinking in the cooperative classroom. Palatine: IRI/Skylight.

Berry, J.M., & West, R.L. (1993). Cognitive self-efficacy in relation to personal mastery and goal setting across the life span. International Journal of Behavioral Development, 16, 351-379.

Boggiano, A.K., & Barrett, M. (1992). Gender differences in depression in children as a function of motivational orientation. Sex Roles, 26, 11-17.

Clark, D.L., & Astuto, T.A. (1994). Redirecting reform: Challenges to popular assumptions about teachers and students. Phi Delta Kappan, March, 1994, 513-516.

Curry, N.E., & Johnson, C.N. (1990). Beyond self-esteem: Developing a genuine sense of human value. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

Davis, D.E. (1988). My friends & me. Minnesota: American Guidance Service.

Deci, E.L., Vallerand, R.J., Pelletier, L.G., & Ryan, R.M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. Educational Psychologist, 26, 325-346.

Derman-Sparks, L., & The A.B.C. Task Force (1989). Anti-bias curriculum. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

Elkind, D. (1987). Miseducation: Preschoolers at risk. New York: Knopf.

Fields, J.C. (1993). Paralysis of Will: To unleash a 'Can-Do' Spirit. The School Administrator, June, 1993, 9-13.

Foyle, H.C., Lyman, L., & Thies, S.A. (1991). Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom. Washington, D.C.: NEA.

Fry, P.G., McKinney, L.J., & Phillips, K.B. (1994). Expanding multicultural curriculum: Helping children discover cultural similarities. Social Studies and the Young Learner, 6, 9-15.

Gottfried, A.E. (1983). Intrinsic motivation in young children. Young Children, 39, 64-73.

Gottfried, A.E. (1990). Academic intrinsic motivation in young elementary school children. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82, 525-538.

Gottfried, A.E., Fleming, J.S., & Gottfried, A.W. (1994). Role of parental motivation practices in children's academic intrinsic motivation and achievement. Journal of Educational Psychology, 86, 104-113.

Heroman, Deborah S. (1990). Student perceptions of the learning environment: Assessment of teacher performance and student learning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ED 338 356). Boston: MA.

Hitz, R., & Driscoll,A. (1988). Praise or encouragement? New insights into praise: Implications for early childhood teachers. Young Children. The Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 43, 6-13.

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., Holubec, E.J., & Roy, P. (1984). Circles of learning. Virginia: ASCD.

Johnson, H.H. (1994). The bodyworks: Inside me-another approach to alike and different. Young Children. The Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 49, 21-25.

Katz, L.G. & Chard, S.C. (1990). Engaging children's minds: The project approach. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Kinderman, T.A. (1993). Natural peer groups as contexts for individual development: The case of children's motivation in school. Developmental Psychology, 29, 970-977.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). What we can learn from multicultural education research. Educational Leadership, May, 1994, 22-26.

Marshall, H.H., & Weinstein, R.S. (1984). Classroom factors affecting students' self-evaluations: An interactional model. Review of Educational Research, 54, 301-325.

Matsumoto-Grah, K. (1992). Diversity in the classroom: A checklist. In D.A. Byrnes & G. Kiger (Eds.), Common Bonds (pp. 105-108). Wheaton, MD: Association for Childhood Education International.

McCracken, J.B. (1993). Valuing diversity: The primary years. Washington D.C.: NAEYC.

Neugebauer, B. (Ed.) (1992). Alike and different. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

Nieto, S. (1992). Affirming diversity. White Plains: Longman.

Perrone, V. (1994). How to engage students in learning. Educational Leadership, Feb., 1994, 11-13.

Perry, P., & Fraser, J. (1993). Freedom Plow. London: Roulledge.

Schunk, D.H. (1983). Reward contingencies and the development of children's skills and self-efficacy. Journal of Educational Psychology, 75, 511-518.

Schunk, D.H. (1984). Sequential attributional feedback and children's achievement behaviors. Journal of Educational Psychology, 76, 1159-1169.

Schunk, D.H. (1984). Self-efficacy perspective on achievement behavior. Educational Psychologist, 19, 48-58.

Schunk, D.H. (1990). Introduction to the special section on motivation and efficacy. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82, 3-6.

Silvestri, L., Dantonio, M., & Eason, S. (1994). Enhancement of self-esteem in at risk elementary students. Journal of Health Education, 25, 30-36.

Skinner, E.A., & Belmont, J.J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. Journal of Educational Psychology, 85, 571-581.

Skinner, E.A., Wellborn, J.G., & Connell, J.P. (1990). What it takes to do well in school and whether I've got it: A process model of perceived control and children's engagement and achievement in school. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82, 22-32.

Spitzer, D.R. (1993). Training technology. Educational Technology, May, 33-34.

Vold, E.B. (Ed.) (1992). Multicultural education in early childhood classrooms. Washington D.C.: NEA.

Voltz, D.L., & Damiano-Lantz, M. (1993). Developing ownership in learning.

Teaching Exceptional Children, Summer, 18-22.

Willis, S. (1993). Multicultural teaching: Meeting the challenges that arise in practice. ASCD Curriculum Update, 1-8. Alexandria: VA.

Wiske, M.S. (1994). How teaching for understanding changes the rules in the classroom. Educational Leadership, 51, 19-21.

Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Permission Letter
Kindergarten

September 20, 1994

Dear Parent,

During the 1994-95 school year I will be completing a masters degree program through St. Xavier University and the Illinois Renewal Institute/Skylight. A requirement for the degree, "Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership", is to conduct a research project. The topic I have selected is, "Improvement of Student Engagement in Academic and Social Activities". As part of the project it will be necessary for me to collect data from students and parents. For convenience and accuracy in collecting this data a video camera or tape recorder may be used. Any videos and tapes will be kept confidential and will be for my analysis purposes only. Students' names will not be used in analyzing or reporting the results of the study.

Please complete the form below and have your child return it to me by Thursday, September 22.

If you have any questions, please call me at Hickory Point School (phone #). Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

****

I have been informed of the research project being conducted in (teacher's name) kindergarten class.

_____ _____

(date) (parent signature)

Appendix B

Parent Permission Letter
Third Grade

September 20, 1994

Dear Parent,

During the 1994-95 school year I will be completing a masters degree program through St. Xavier University and the Illinois Renewal Institute/Skylight. A requirement for the degree, "Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership", is to conduct a research project. The topic I have selected is, "Improvement of Student Engagement in Academic and Social Activities". As part of the project it will be necessary for me to collect attitudinal data from students and parents. For convenience and accuracy in collecting this data a video camera or tape recorder may be used. Any videos and tapes will be kept confidential and will be for my analysis purposes only. Students' names will not be used in analyzing or reporting the results of the study.

Please complete the form below and have your child return it to me by Tuesday, October 4. If you have any questions, please call me at Lincoln School (phone #). Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Third Grade Teacher

****

_____ I give permission for my son/daughter, _____ to participate in the "Improvement of Student Engagement in Academic and Social Activities" research project.

_____ I do not give permission for my son/daughter, _____ to participate in the "Improvement of Student Engagement in Academic and Social Activities" research project.

_____ _____

(date) (parent's signature)

Appendix C

Student Questionnaire - Fall
Kindergarten

1. I like the way I look.	Y	N
2. I am good at a lot of things.	Y	N
3. I am often sad.	Y	N
4. My classmates in school think I have good ideas.	Y	N
5. Most of the time, I'd rather be in a classroom with students of different races.	Y	N
6. It is hard for me to make friends.	Y	N
7. I have good ideas.	Y	N
8. I sometimes get worried in school.	Y	N
9. I often raise my hand in school.	Y	N
10. I am among the last to be chosen for games.	Y	N
11. I am comfortable playing with other children.	Y	N
12. I feel important in school.	Y	N
13. I work hard in school.	Y	N
14. I participate in school.	Y	N
15. I feel I can ask my teacher anything.	Y	N

16. I worry a lot.	Y	N
17. I am a happy person.	Y	N
18. I like being the way I am.	Y	N
19. Most of the time, I like being with my classmates.	Y	N
20. I don't like playing in a group of children.	Y	N
21. I usually want my own way.	Y	N
22. When things go wrong I give up.	Y	N
23. I talk in front of my class.	Y	N
24. I don't like trying new things.	Y	N
25. I feel left out.	Y	N
26. I don't like working in groups.	Y	N
27. I feel comfortable in school with the class.	Y	N
28. My school work is interesting.	Y	N
29. There is time to learn things I am interested in.	Y	N
30. I can find things to do in school.	Y	N
31. I am easy to get along with.	Y	N
32. I wish I were different.	Y	N
33. I am proud of myself and my accomplishments.	Y	N

34. Most of the time, some students help me.	Y	N
35. I don't have a lot of friends.	Y	N
36. I don't get into lots of fights.	Y	N
37. I am as smart as the other students.	Y	N
38. When things go wrong it's my fault.	Y	N
39. In games, I watch instead of play.	Y	N
40. I am easy to get along with.	Y	N
41. People pick on me.	Y	N
42. Getting into a group is hard for me.	Y	N
43. There are lots of things I want to learn about.	Y	N
44. Things I learn in school make me think of new ideas.	Y	N
45. There is not enough time to share my ideas in school.	Y	N
46. My friends think I am cool.	Y	N
47. I am sometimes mean to other people.	Y	N
48. I like to do difficult things.	Y	N
49. People don't play with me.	Y	N
50. I feel I have to do better than my classmates.	Y	N

Appendix D

Student Questionnaire - Fall
Third Grade

Read each statement. Circle the number to show your answer.

1	2	3	4	5
Often		Sometimes		Never

1. I like the way I look.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am good at a lot of things.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am sad.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My classmates in school think I have good ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I like being in a classroom with students of different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is hard for me to make friends.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I worry in school.	1	2	3	4	5

8. I often raise my hand in school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am comfortable playing with other children.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel important in school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I participate in class.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I like being with my classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I usually want my own way.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When things go wrong I give up.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am comfortable talking in front of the class.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I don't like trying new things.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel left out.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I don't like working in groups.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel comfortable in school with the class.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My school work is interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
21. There is time to learn things I am interested in.	1	2	3	4	5

22. I am easy to get along with.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I wish I were different.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am proud of my self and my accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When things go wrong, it's my fault.	1	2	3	4	5
26. In games, I watch instead of play.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Getting into a group is hard for me.	1	2	3	4	5
28. There are lots of things I want to learn about.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Things I learn in school make me think of new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
30. There is not enough time to share my ideas in school.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I like to do difficult things.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I feel I have to do better than my classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I feel comfortable with my teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I am not as smart as the other students in my class.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I have many friends.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E

Student Questionnaire - Spring
Kindergarten

1. I like playing with other children.	Y	N
2. It is hard for me to make friends.	Y	N
3. I like to try new things.	Y	N
4. I am often sad.	Y	N
5. I sometimes get worried in school.	Y	N
6. I usually want my own way.	Y	N
7. I feel left out.	Y	N
8. I like working in groups.	Y	N
9. I wish I were different.	Y	N
10. I have a lot of friends.	Y	N
11. I am as smart as the other students.	Y	N
12. When things go wrong it's my fault.	Y	N
13. People pick on me.	Y	N
14. Getting into a group is hard for me.	Y	N
15. There is enough time to share my ideas in school.	Y	N

Appendix F

Student Questionnaire - Spring
Third Grade

Read each statement. Circle the number to show your answer.

1 Often	2	3 Sometimes	4	5 Never

1. I am good at a lot of things.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am sad.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My classmates in school think I have good ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is hard for me to make friends.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel comfortable raising my hand in class.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel important in school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When things go wrong I give up.	1	2	3	4	5

8. I am comfortable talking in front of the class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I don't like trying new things.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel left out.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I don't like working in groups.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am comfortable playing with other children.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My school work is interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
14. There is time to learn things I am interested in.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am easy to get along with.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Getting into a group is hard for me.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Things I learn in school make me think of new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
18. There is not enough time to share my ideas in school.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am not as smart as the other students in my class.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have many friends.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix G

Parent Questionnaire Letter
Kindergarten and Third Grade

September 26, 1994

Dear Parent,

Because no one knows your child the way you do, your insights are invaluable. Your responses to the attached questionnaire will enhance my understanding of your child and will be helpful in the development of the research project I am designing.

Please return the completed questionnaire to me by Wednesday, September 28. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

(Teacher's Signature)

Appendix H

Parent Questionnaire
Kindergarten and Third Grade

Child's Name _____

Please circle the number that best describes your child.

1. My child looks forward to going to school.

1	2	3	4	5
most of the time		sometimes		rarely

2. My child takes (safe) risks. (Ex. Attempt a new game.)

1	2	3	4	5
most of the time		sometimes		rarely

3. My child gets absorbed in activities.

1	2	3	4	5
most of the time		sometimes		rarely

4. My child gives up easily when tasks are difficult.

1	2	3	4	5
most of the time		sometimes		rarely

5. My child sets and pursues goals.

1	2	3	4	5
most of the time		sometimes		rarely

6. My child enjoys playing with a group of children.

1	2	3	4	5
most of the time		sometimes		rarely

What do you feel are your child's strengths?

What would you like me to know about your child?

Appendix I

Family History Questionnaire
Kindergarten

Family History Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of our Kindergarten Family History/Multicultural Project. Please work with your child to fill in the answers and return to school by _____. Thanks! (Answers reflect the *child's* history.)

1. I was born in _____.
   city/state

2. My mother's name is _____. She was born in _____ on _____, _____.
   state (or country) date year

3. My father's name is _____. He was born in _____ on _____, _____.
   state (or country) date year

4. My mother's parents live or lived in _____.
   state (or country)

   They were born in _____ and _____.
   state (or country) state (or country)

5. My father's parents live or lived in _____.

   They were born in _____ and _____.
   state (or country) state (or country)

6. Did my grandparents or great-grandparents come from another country?

   Which person? _____

   Which country? _____

130

7. What is my family's cultural/ethnic heritage? _____

8. Does our family have special customs or traditions? What are they? _____

_____

9. Tell a story about a special relative who's important to our family. _____

_____

Taken from: Derman-Sparks, L., & The A.B.C. Task Force (1989). Anti-bias curriculum. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

Appendix J

Behavioral Checklist

Kindergarten and Third Grade

Name	Is not in physical proximity to other children	Appears to listen but does not contribute	Demonstrates enthusiasm	Demonstrates curiosity	Demonstrates independence	Exhibits intrinsic motivation	Appears absorbed in activities
			132				